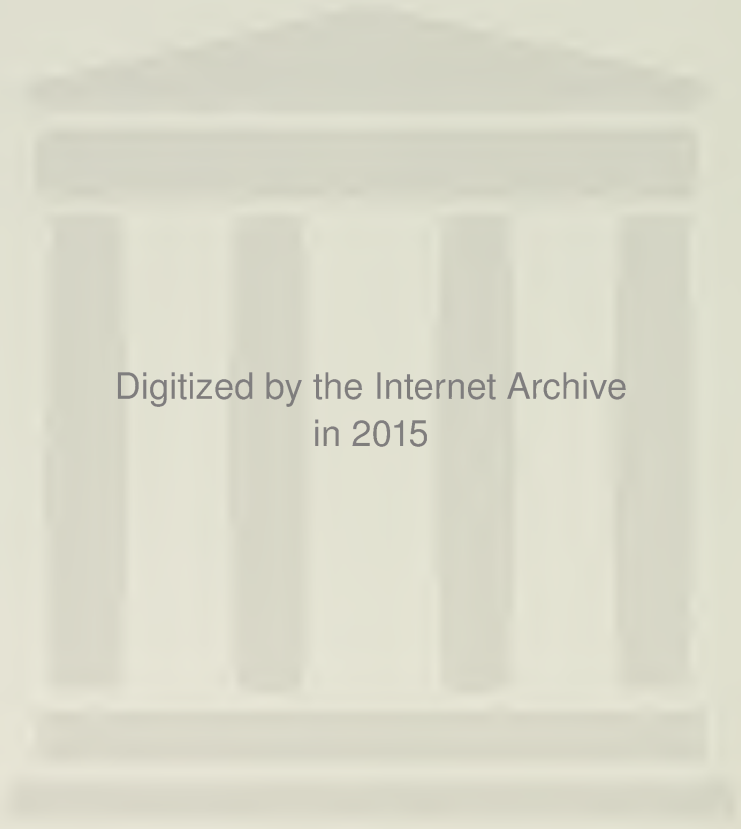
THE WATERMARK

A Journal of the Arts • University of Massachusetts • Boston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Volume 7
2000

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Dedicated to the Memory of

Sam Walker

The art community at UMass Boston mourns the loss of Professor Sam Walker, who passed away last Fall. He was a talented artist, but more importantly, a dedicated teacher. For those who were fortunate enough to work with Sam, you know that he had the ability to push you creatively beyond limits you thought you had and you never wanted to disappoint him. He would never let you say, "I can't." Instead, he would say: "Try it out. See what happens." The impact Sam made on people is truly indescribable. We will miss him.

The staff of *The WATERMARK* dedicates this year's artwork to Professor Sam Walker.

"My Fillet Knife was Missing"
Softground Etching
Susan Costagliola

The Lillian Lorraine Jones Memorial Prize

Through the generosity of the Creative Writing Program, *The Watermark* is able to offer a prize for an outstanding piece of fiction or prose. The editors of *The Watermark* are pleased to announce that we are awarding **The Lillian Lorraine Jones Memorial Prize to:**

Paul A. Ridge
for his short story entitled:
And the Angels Sing

Honorable Mention
goes to:

Nicole Clark
for her Poem entitled:
9/9/99

And to:

Susan Boudreau
for her poem entitled:
Estate Sale

Congratulations from ***The Watermark***
and the Creative Writing Program.

Paul A. Ridge

"And the Angels Sing"

They let Dicky out of the big house some time in the summer of 1951. When we was kids, Dicky was always gettin' himself into trouble; startin' right out with stealin' from the candy store to pickin' pockets and stealin' cars. We had some wild times, me and him. As we started getting' a little bit older, though, myself and the rest of the kids in the neighborhood started coolin' off, ya know: meetin' girls, tryin' to get jobs and so on. Me, I started workin' for Frank Miami as a busboy at the El Paradiso in Coconut Grove. After I paid my dues and Frank started rememberin' my name, he put me to work helpin' out behind the bar from time to time. Eventually, the head bar-tender, Black Mikey (a colored guy, but a good shit and quite a dresser) got cut up by his old lady and before I knows it, BAM! I'm workin' the bar by myself. I had to quit school so's I could work there full time but so what, right? No sense goin' to school if you already got a good job.

Let me tell ya, though, the El Paradiso was the place to be. Movie stars comin' in all the time, Frank Miami and his friends shootin' craps in the back room, their broads, some of 'em still lookin' good, some of 'em all crapped out, hangin' 'round the bar chewin' my ear off about their "sometimes steadies," losin' money to Frank...there was no other place I'd rather've been. After Black Mikey left, let me tell 'ya, I was doin' pretty good. Got me a girl, got me my own place, got me a car; I was all set. I was gettin' so tight with Frank Miami that I asked him if he had something around the club that Dicky could do. At the time, Dicky was just hustlin' whatever he could so that he could eat, buy booze, and get cozy with broads. Frank was like "You got it, Ben. Say, is he good lookin'?" I didn't know how to answer that so all's I said was "Well, the broads think he's swell, Mr. Miami."

So I call around the neighborhood later that afternoon, lookin' for Dicky. I find him hustlin' pool and gettin' real friendly with some real friendly girls and I take him aside and I tells him I got him a job if he wants it, at the El Paradiso. "The El Paradiso?" he says "Are you serious? Ben...Benny, you're the best friend a fella ever had." Honest to God, he puts me in a bear hug right then and there. Them girls start laughin' because Dicky's half my size, but I'll be damned if I didn't make his day. Sure enough, he shows up at the El Paradiso that night, wearin' a borrowed tux, and I showed him how the guest list worked and who to let in no matter what and who to keep out no matter what.

Frank Miami liked Dicky just fine and Dicky, even though he was always scammin' and always startin' shit up in the neighborhood, was just

as polite as, uhhh...just as polite as anything when Frank came by to look in on things. They were a lot alike, I guess, Dicky and Frank, except that Frank was a first rate businessman and Dicky couldn't have held on to a steady job if it was nailed to the floor. At first, I was afraid that Dicky might get smart with Frank but he just played it cool and laughed at Frank's jokes and did whatever he was told.

I'm gettin' on now in years and I've noticed, from watchin' some of the punks I've hired to bus, that some guys are strong starters but after a few weeks, they start callin' in sick or comin' to work drunk and eventually they just stop comin' at all. Maybe I should've known it before but that's how Dicky was. He started off OK; Frank and his friends all liked him, the broads (most of 'em high-class New York girls) liked him and there was no problems. Dicky did so good for a couple months that I thought he had really started to cool off, but then, real early in the morning while we was gettin' the club cleaned up after a busy night, one of them crapped out broads took Dicky into the john and showed him how to shoot H. Dicky got crazy for that shit. Just a few weeks later, he starts callin' in sick now and then and he starts askin' for an advance on his pay every week. Eventually, Frank just starts payin' Dicky in bags of H and Dicky starts hustlin' during the day so's he can eat.

It was the first time that The Stan Kenton Orchestra played at the El Paradiso though, that Dicky started to get sloppy. The club was packed, of course, Stan Kenton playin' and all, and it was all I could do, even with two of them Cuban kids helpin' me, to keep up with the drinks. I figured that the door must've been busy as hell too, because everybody in Miami would be trying to get in and Dicky must've had a hard time keepin' anyone who wasn't on the list out of the club. The bouncers was helpin' him control the crowd of course, but Frank Miami liked things to look classy and he didn't like havin' just a couple of big muscle-heads at the door keepin' the crowd back. Frank always had to have some babe-killer there, like Dicky, to keep things lookin' civilized. Also, I don't think Frank's muscle-heads could've read a name off a list if they had to.

Anyhow, I'm strugglin' to keep people drinkin' when all the sudden I look up and there's Dicky sittin' at a table right in front of the Kenton band. "Holy shit!" I says to myself, "If Frank looks up from that broad he's on and sees Dicky sittin' down on the job, there's gonna be hell to pay." I told the Cuban kids I'd be right back and I ran to where Dicky was sittin'. He was all by himself. His eyes were closed and he was swayin' like he was dancin' with himself. "Dicky!" I says, "Dicky, you better get back to the door before Frank sees you!" Dicky didn't say nothin' at first so I said it again and he just goes "Benny, man, damn, this band is *good*!" "Dicky," I says back to him, tryin' to pull him to his feet, "if you don't get back to work Frank'll pull your ears off and this'll be the last band you ever hear. Get up!" As I'm tryin' to pull him up, though, his sleeve rides up his arm a little and I can see his veins are all black from the junk and I realize that

he's high as a kite. At last, Dicky snaps out of it and goes back to the door.

Don't you know it though, around midnight when the Kenton boys go back on stage for their second set, a brawl breaks out at the door. I didn't notice it at first because the club was so packed but all the sudden these broads start screamin' and pointin' and I look up from mixin' a drink and there's the bouncers fightin' like hell to keep the crowd back. Now, whenever that happens, the guy at the door with the list is supposed to tell the bouncers to push the crowd back so he can lock the door from the inside so's things don't get too ugly. Like a piece of metal to a magnet, Dicky was back at that table watchin' the Kenton band and dancin' with himself like I seen him do before. The muscle-heads couldn't hold the crowd back and lock the door from the inside at the same time so after a while, even those gorillas couldn't keep them people back. All these kids, even people from me and Dicky's neighborhood, ran to the dance floor and started dancin'. The band was playin' that "Peanut Vendor" tune and it was loud as hell; I couldn't even hear myself think. I looked up and saw Frank Miami stand up, mad as a hornet. Here he is, the owner of the nicest club in Miami, probably the best band in the country playin', nobody but movie stars, big-time politicians, and businessmen in the club, when all the sudden all these kids take over the place. Of course, I'm worried about Dicky and I'm prayin' to God that he had the sense to get out of the club before Frank finds out why the door was never locked and breaks his legs. But no, there's Dicky startin' a Conga line on the dance floor. Also, I notice that there's cops arrestin' the cigarette girls' cause they ain't just sellin' cigarettes. Frank used to have his girls give samples and sell marijuana, H, and coke in empty cigarette packs. The cops knew about it but whenever they got a warrant to search the El Paradiso for drugs, the judge would always call Frank first to tell him that the cops were comin'. Of course, they never found nothin'. When Dicky let that crowd in though, he also let in the undercover cops that always wait in line and try to get in; that's why the list is so important for only lettin' trusted people in and keepin' people Frank didn't know, out.

Anyway, Frank, Steve Vito, Tony Menucci, and Joey Camara fight their way to Dicky, pick him up over their heads, and haul him into the back room. I practically shit myself. Frank was known for doin' some of his worst work in the back room and just about everyone in the club knew it. Things started coolin' off, the band stopped playin' and the bouncers started gettin' the undesireables out of the club. The cops were still nosin' around but they didn't go where Frank was and they didn't seem to care since they had enough evidence against him, with all them drugs they found on the cigarette girls.

Things started gettin' busy at the bar again but I just had to go see what they was doin' to Dicky so I went to the back room and knocked on the door. It was real quiet in there and I couldn't here nothin' but after a minute or so Frank asked who it was. I go "It's me, Benny the bartender,

Mr. Miami." Then, the door opens a crack and Frank looks at me, makes sure there's no one else with me, and he grabs me by the collar and pulls me into the room.

I almost fell when he yanked me in there but I didn't. I hadn't never been in the back room before and it was big. I always thought it was real small but it was at least as big as a small restaurant. I knew there was craps tables in there but there was also roulette wheels, blackjack tables, a pool table, and another table that they probably played poker at. There was even a bar on wheels and almost as much booze as I had at the main one. There was Dicky, alive, but down on the floor with his nose bleedin' and his clothes all tore up. Frank, Tony, Joey, Steve, and all them other guys was just lookin' at him and me and they wasn't happy. I start "Mr. Miami," but Frank just puts up a hand like he don't want to hear from me. For a minute, I thought they was gonna do me, too, but Frank just goes "Dicky, you are a fuckin' liability. Here," he points at me, "your friend sticks his neck out for a fuckin' loser like you and you let him down by turnin' my club into a fuckin' circus. What's my clientel gonna think of me, huh? They're gonna think I'm a fuckin' moron!"

I was sure that they was gonna make Dicky into alligator food right then, but Frank just stood there thinkin'. Then, that big-mouth, Joey Camara, goes "Hey, Frank," pointin' at me "what about this fuckin' guy? He got you to hire this junked-up piece of shit, you want me to break something on him?" Frank just looks at Joey like he's a retard and goes "Are you outa your fuckin' mind, Joey? Benny's the best bartender I ever had. He's just not as good a judge of character as I am. Ain't that so Ben-Ben?" I'm feelin' a little better when he says that, because I'm pretty sure I'm not gonna die, so I go "Yes, sir, Mr. Miami." Then Frank reaches down and picks Dicky up by the front of his shirt and lifts him up off the ground. Dicky was too high to even be scared but at least he wasn't actin' all goofy no more. Frank looks Dicky in the eye and goes "Listen to me, you junkie little punk. I'm givin' you a choice: either you confess to the cops that the drugs here are all part of your own racket and that I didn't know nothin' about 'em or you, me, Tony, Joey, and Stevie take a ride into the Everglades and feed you to the wildlife. You got ten seconds to choose." Dicky, gettin' more sober by the minute was able to say "OK, Mr. Miami, I'll take the heat." Mr. Miami set him back on the floor, dusted him off, and turned him over to the cops.

Dicky's trial was a joke. Frank owned every judge in Florida, of course, so he got off scot-free. Frank also made sure that all the evidence pointed to Dicky and in the end, Dicky was sentenced to ten years in Opa-Locka for dealing narcotics and racketeering. In prison, Dicky met up with a couple of colored guys that was also in for drugs but had been musicians before they got locked up. The prison never provided hardly any entertainment to the inmates, so every week these colored guys would play a concert. They took a shine to Dicky and he started singin' for 'em. I never

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Dedicated to the Memory of

Sam Walker

The art community at UMass Boston mourns the loss of Professor Sam Walker, who passed away last Fall. He was a talented artist, but more importantly, a dedicated teacher. For those who were fortunate enough to work with Sam, you know that he had the ability to push you creatively beyond limits you thought you had and you never wanted to disappoint him. He would never let you say, "I can't." Instead, he would say: "Try it out. See what happens." The impact Sam made on people is truly indescribable. We will miss him.

The staff of *The WATERMARK* dedicates this year's artwork to Professor Sam Walker.

"My Fillet Knife was Missing"
Softground Etching
Susan Costagliola

The Lillian Lorraine Jones Memorial Prize

Through the generosity of the Creative Writing Program, *The Watermark* is able to offer a prize for an outstanding piece of fiction or prose. The editors of *The Watermark* are pleased to announce that we are awarding **The Lillian Lorraine Jones Memorial Prize to:**

Paul A. Ridge
for his short story entitled:
And the Angels Sing

Honorable Mention
goes to:

Nicole Clark
for her Poem entitled:
9/9/99

And to:

Susan Boudreau
for her poem entitled:
Estate Sale

Congratulations from *The Watermark*
and the Creative Writing Program.

Paul A. Ridge

"And the Angels Sing"

They let Dicky out of the big house some time in the summer of 1951. When we was kids, Dicky was always gettin' himself into trouble; startin' right out with stealin' from the candy store to pickin' pockets and stealin' cars. We had some wild times, me and him. As we started getting' a little bit older, though, myself and the rest of the kids in the neighborhood started coolin' off, ya know: meetin' girls, tryin' to get jobs and so on. Me, I started workin' for Frank Miami as a busboy at the El Paradiso in Coconut Grove. After I paid my dues and Frank started rememberin' my name, he put me to work helpin' out behind the bar from time to time. Eventually, the head bar-tender, Black Mikey (a colored guy, but a good shit and quite a dresser) got cut up by his old lady and before I knows it, BAM! I'm workin' the bar by myself. I had to quit school so's I could work there full time but so what, right? No sense goin' to school if you already got a good job.

Let me tell ya, though, the El Paradiso was the place to be. Movie stars comin' in all the time, Frank Miami and his friends shootin' craps in the back room, their broads, some of 'em still lookin' good, some of 'em all crapped out, hangin' 'round the bar chewin' my ear off about their "sometimes steadies," losin' money to Frank...there was no other place I'd rather've been. After Black Mikey left, let me tell 'ya, I was doin' pretty good. Got me a girl, got me my own place, got me a car; I was all set. I was gettin' so tight with Frank Miami that I asked him if he had something around the club that Dicky could do. At the time, Dicky was just hustlin' whatever he could so that he could eat, buy booze, and get cozy with broads. Frank was like "You got it, Ben. Say, is he good lookin'?" I didn't know how to answer that so all's I said was "Well, the broads think he's swell, Mr. Miami."

So I call around the neighborhood later that afternoon, lookin' for Dicky. I find him hustlin' pool and gettin' real friendly with some real friendly girls and I take him aside and I tells him I got him a job if he wants it, at the El Paradiso. "The El Paradiso?" he says "Are you serious? Ben...Benny, you're the best friend a fella ever had." Honest to God, he puts me in a bear hug right then and there. Them girls start laughin' because Dicky's half my size, but I'll be damned if I didn't make his day. Sure enough, he shows up at the El Paradiso that night, wearin' a borrowed tux, and I showed him how the guest list worked and who to let in no matter what and who to keep out no matter what.

Frank Miami liked Dicky just fine and Dicky, even though he was always scammin' and always startin' shit up in the neighborhood, was just

as polite as, uhhh...just as polite as anything when Frank came by to look in on things. They were a lot alike, I guess, Dicky and Frank, except that Frank was a first rate businessman and Dicky couldn't have held on to a steady job if it was nailed to the floor. At first, I was afraid that Dicky might get smart with Frank but he just played it cool and laughed at Frank's jokes and did whatever he was told.

I'm gettin' on now in years and I've noticed, from watchin' some of the punks I've hired to bus, that some guys are strong starters but after a few weeks, they start callin' in sick or comin' to work drunk and eventually they just stop comin' at all. Maybe I should've known it before but that's how Dicky was. He started off OK; Frank and his friends all liked him, the broads (most of 'em high-class New York girls) liked him and there was no problems. Dicky did so good for a couple months that I thought he had really started to cool off, but then, real early in the morning while we was gettin' the club cleaned up after a busy night, one of them crapped out broads took Dicky into the john and showed him how to shoot H. Dicky got crazy for that shit. Just a few weeks later, he starts callin' in sick now and then and he starts askin' for an advance on his pay every week. Eventually, Frank just starts payin' Dicky in bags of H and Dicky starts hustlin' during the day so's he can eat.

It was the first time that The Stan Kenton Orchestra played at the El Paradiso though, that Dicky started to get sloppy. The club was packed, of course, Stan Kenton playin' and all, and it was all I could do, even with two of them Cuban kids helpin' me, to keep up with the drinks. I figured that the door must've been busy as hell too, because everybody in Miami would be trying to get in and Dicky must've had a hard time keepin' anyone who wasn't on the list out of the club. The bouncers was helpin' him control the crowd of course, but Frank Miami liked things to look classy and he didn't like havin' just a couple of big muscle-heads at the door keepin' the crowd back. Frank always had to have some babe-killer there, like Dicky, to keep things lookin' civilized. Also, I don't think Frank's muscle-heads could've read a name off a list if they had to.

Anyhow, I'm strugglin' to keep people drinkin' when all the sudden I look up and there's Dicky sittin' at a table right in front of the Kenton band. "Holy shit!" I says to myself, "If Frank looks up from that broad he's on and sees Dicky sittin' down on the job, there's gonna be hell to pay." I told the Cuban kids I'd be right back and I ran to where Dicky was sittin'. He was all by himself. His eyes were closed and he was swayin' like he was dancin' with himself. "Dicky!" I says, "Dicky, you better get back to the door before Frank sees you!" Dicky didn't say nothin' at first so I said it again and he just goes "Benny, man, damn, this band is *good*!" "Dicky," I says back to him, tryin' to pull him to his feet, "if you don't get back to work Frank'll pull your ears off and this'll be the last band you ever hear. Get up!" As I'm tryin' to pull him up, though, his sleeve rides up his arm a little and I can see his veins are all black from the junk and I realize that

he's high as a kite. At last, Dicky snaps out of it and goes back to the door.

Don't you know it though, around midnight when the Kenton boys go back on stage for their second set, a brawl breaks out at the door. I didn't notice it at first because the club was so packed but all the sudden these broads start screamin' and pointin' and I look up from mixin' a drink and there's the bouncers fightin' like hell to keep the crowd back. Now, whenever that happens, the guy at the door with the list is supposed to tell the bouncers to push the crowd back so he can lock the door from the inside so's things don't get too ugly. Like a piece of metal to a magnet, Dicky was back at that table watchin' the Kenton band and dancin' with himself like I seen him do before. The muscle-heads couldn't hold the crowd back and lock the door from the inside at the same time so after a while, even those gorillas couldn't keep them people back. All these kids, even people from me and Dicky's neighborhood, ran to the dance floor and started dancin'. The band was playin' that "Peanut Vendor" tune and it was loud as hell; I couldn't even hear myself think. I looked up and saw Frank Miami stand up, mad as a hornet. Here he is, the owner of the nicest club in Miami, probably the best band in the country playin', nobody but movie stars, big-time politicians, and businessmen in the club, when all the sudden all these kids take over the place. Of course, I'm worried about Dicky and I'm prayin' to God that he had the sense to get out of the club before Frank finds out why the door was never locked and breaks his legs. But no, there's Dicky startin' a Conga line on the dance floor. Also, I notice that there's cops arrestin' the cigarette girls' cause they ain't just sellin' cigarettes. Frank used to have his girls give samples and sell marijuana, H, and coke in empty cigarette packs. The cops knew about it but whenever they got a warrant to search the El Paradiso for drugs, the judge would always call Frank first to tell him that the cops were comin'. Of course, they never found nothin'. When Dicky let that crowd in though, he also let in the undercover cops that always wait in line and try to get in; that's why the list is so important for only lettin' trusted people in and keepin' people Frank didn't know, out.

Anyway, Frank, Steve Vito, Tony Menucci, and Joey Camara fight their way to Dicky, pick him up over their heads, and haul him into the back room. I practically shit myself. Frank was known for doin' some of his worst work in the back room and just about everyone in the club knew it. Things started coolin' off, the band stopped playin' and the bouncers started gettin' the undesireables out of the club. The cops were still nosin' around but they didn't go where Frank was and they didn't seem to care since they had enough evidence against him, with all them drugs they found on the cigarette girls.

Things started gettin' busy at the bar again but I just had to go see what they was doin' to Dicky so I went to the back room and knocked on the door. It was real quiet in there and I couldn't here nothin' but after a minute or so Frank asked who it was. I go "It's me, Benny the bartender,

Mr. Miami." Then, the door opens a crack and Frank looks at me, makes sure there's no one else with me, and he grabs me by the collar and pulls me into the room.

I almost fell when he yanked me in there but I didn't. I hadn't never been in the back room before and it was big. I always thought it was real small but it was at least as big as a small restaurant. I knew there was craps tables in there but there was also roulette wheels, blackjack tables, a pool table, and another table that they probably played poker at. There was even a bar on wheels and almost as much booze as I had at the main one. There was Dicky, alive, but down on the floor with his nose bleedin' and his clothes all tore up. Frank, Tony, Joey, Steve, and all them other guys was just lookin' at him and me and they wasn't happy. I start "Mr. Miami," but Frank just puts up a hand like he don't want to hear from me. For a minute, I thought they was gonna do me, too, but Frank just goes "Dicky, you are a fuckin' liability. Here," he points at me, "your friend sticks his neck out for a fuckin' loser like you and you let him down by turnin' my club into a fuckin' circus. What's my clientel gonna think of me, huh? They're gonna think I'm a fuckin' moron!"

I was sure that they was gonna make Dicky into alligator food right then, but Frank just stood there thinkin'. Then, that big-mouth, Joey Camara, goes "Hey, Frank," pointin' at me "what about this fuckin' guy? He got you to hire this junked-up piece of shit, you want me to break something on him?" Frank just looks at Joey like he's a retard and goes "Are you outa your fuckin' mind, Joey? Benny's the best bartender I ever had. He's just not as good a judge of character as I am. Ain't that so Ben-Ben?" I'm feelin' a little better when he says that, because I'm pretty sure I'm not gonna die, so I go "Yes, sir, Mr. Miami." Then Frank reaches down and picks Dicky up by the front of his shirt and lifts him up off the ground. Dicky was too high to even be scared but at least he wasn't actin' all goofy no more. Frank looks Dicky in the eye and goes "Listen to me, you junkie little punk. I'm givin' you a choice: either you confess to the cops that the drugs here are all part of your own racket and that I didn't know nothin' about 'em or you, me, Tony, Joey, and Stevie take a ride into the Everglades and feed you to the wildlife. You got ten seconds to choose." Dicky, gettin' more sober by the minute was able to say "OK, Mr. Miami, I'll take the heat." Mr. Miami set him back on the floor, dusted him off, and turned him over to the cops.

Dicky's trial was a joke. Frank owned every judge in Florida, of course, so he got off scot-free. Frank also made sure that all the evidence pointed to Dicky and in the end, Dicky was sentenced to ten years in Opa-Locka for dealing narcotics and racketeering. In prison, Dicky met up with a couple of colored guys that was also in for drugs but had been musicians before they got locked up. The prison never provided hardly any entertainment to the inmates, so every week these colored guys would play a concert. They took a shine to Dicky and he started singin' for 'em. I never

knew Dicky could sing, I don't think even Dicky knew he could sing, but it turns out he wasn't that bad. It wasn't that he had a great voice like Junior Parker or Chet Baker or nothin', but people just like the way he just stood there at the mike with his eyes closed, singin' to himself like no one was watchin' him. When those colored guys finished their stints, they waited for Dicky to finish his (he only had to serve five years; for good behavior and because his crime wasn't violent) and Dicky started singin' full time. I saw him every now and then in the neighborhood and his clothes always looked like a million bucks and he wasn't junked up no more. Him and them guys were playin' mostly colored places but Dicky told me how every now and then they played at classier joints.

Don't you know it but one night I'm tendin' bar at the El Paradiso when who walks in but Dicky and them colored musicians. I almost shit myself when I thought of what Frank would do if he saw Dicky but Dicky was just like "Hey, play it cool, Benny. I'm just here to sing. It's a Tuesday night, Frank probably won't even be here." I was just like, "OK, Dicky, just watch yourself." Dicky just punched me in the arm and laughed. I got him a drink and he took it on stage with him as him and them coloreds warmed up.

That was the first time I ever heard Dicky sing and he did real good. It was pretty busy for a Tuesday and the crowd was actually paying attention to Dicky and the band, which was unusual because the bands Frank used to get for mid-week were never that good or famous or anything. The broads, only a few of them New York girls on the list, were into Dicky though, which was somethin' else 'cause Dicky didn't sing or act like no lounge lizard. He just stood up there and swayed and I don't think he even realized them broads was there. A couple of them even remembered him from when he worked the door and they tried to get his attention by wavin' at him, but as long as them colored guys kept playin', he kept singin'. Still, it was like Dicky was playin' hard to get and them girls were goin' more and more ga-ga over him by the minute.

I didn't notice but someone must've called Frank at home or somethin' 'cause right before Dicky's last set, Frank comes in and sits down at a table right in front of the stage. I had one of them Cuban kids bring Frank a drink and he waved thanks back to me when he got it. When Dicky and them colored guys got back on stage to finish the night off, Dicky saw Frank and just stood there on stage not movin' or anything. Frank just shrugs like he's confused and goes "Dicky, my man, I heard you were here and I had to see it for myself. What are you, the band's manager?" Dicky goes "No, Mr. Miami, I'm the singer. I'm a singer now, I'm all cleaned up." Frank scratches his chin and goes "So, what? You fucked up and now you want another chance, is that it? You wanna get paid in cash instead of H just like everyone else, is that it?" Frank wasn't really mad, I don't think. I think he was just tryin' to see if he could trust Dicky again. Dicky, cool as ice, answers "That's the idea, Mr. Miami." and starts the

band off.

Dicky's second set was real good, better than his first, even. Frank just sat and watched him and looked like he was thinkin' long and hard about somethin'. I got a feelin' like Frank wanted to feed Dicky to the alligators but I wasn't sure. Dicky just stood there and sang like there was no one around him.

We closed up around two a.m., right after the band finished. Me and them Cuban kids was gettin' things cleaned up while Dicky and the band broke their stuff down. Frank had gone out for a minute and he paid the band when he came back. He pays each of them colored guys in cash and I could tell by the way they show off their teeth that Frank had given 'em each a little extra. Dicky was helpin' break down the drum kit when it was his turn to get paid. Frank just looks at him for a minute and says "So, you're all clean now, huh?" Dicky just answered all humble "Yes, Mr. Miami." "So what, you're gonna make an honest living now, is that the idea?" asks Frank. Dicky just says the same thing "Yes, Mr. Miami." Frank looked at him without sayin' nothin'. Then, now mind you, we're all watchin' this, me, those Cuban kids, the cooks, the bouncer, everyone, and Frank reaches into his coat pocket and starts pullin' somethin' out. Dicky just stood there, waitin'. No "No, Mr. Miami, please don't shoot me!" or anything like that. No cryin', no nothin'. Finally, Frank pulls out a bag and drops it at Dicky's feet. Dicky looks at it, bends over, and picks it up. It was a bag of H. Dicky just looks at it like his feelin's been hurt. Frank just looks at him and says, "I don't care if you are clean. Get the fuck out of town and don't come back. Ya know what they say: once a fuckin' punk junkie, always a fuckin' punk junkie." Frank just stands there, waitin' for Dicky to do something, I don't know what, mess with him or somethin'. Then I hears this voice go "Hey, Frank, you pay that guy cash, got it? It's your place and you don't gotta like him but he paid his dues just like you told him to, so pay up." When everyone heard that voice, they just stopped what they was doin' and held their breath. Them Cuban kids stopped cleaning glasses, the janitor stopped moppin' the floor, them colored guys stopped packin' their gear up. Then, everyone turns around and stares right at me. I couldn't believe I said what I said to Frank Miami and, honest to God, it was like it wasn't even my own voice talkin'. But it was me and I was steamed that Frank was jerkin' Dicky around after Dicky played cool and did just what Frank wanted ever since he screwed up that night Stan Kenton was in town.

Frank just kept starin' at me and couldn't even say nothin'. Finally, he goes "Benny?...Benny?" I almost shit myself right there but what was done was done, I figured. I just shrugged my shoulders and came around in front of the bar and said real calm "Hey, Mr. Miami, c'mon. Dicky's cool now, see? He don't act junked up, he don't look junked up, he ain't messin' with you. He put in a night's work just like anyone else, even them colored guys. You gotta pay him fair." Like I said, I was pretty sure

I was dead and Frank kept lookin' at me like he wanted to kill me but really, Frank Miami was a pretty decent guy except when he felt like he was bein' scammed. Finally, he grabbed the bag of H out of Dicky's hands and put it in his own pocket. Then he took out a fat roll of greenbacks and paid Dicky fair. Dicky didn't know what to do or say and he just stood there, first lookin' at Frank and then lookin' at me like I was crazy. Frank just turned around, kind of embarrassed, kind of mad I guess, and he starts leavin' the club. As he passes by me, though, he goes "Me and you will talk about this later, Benjamin." Then he just left.

Dicky came right up to me and hugged me which was OK because my knees went all weak and I couldn't hardly stand. Everyone was standin' around me and someone got me a drink and I just got myself back together. Finally, the cook goes "You're dead, you know that, right? Frank doesn't take shit like that." I just nod, there was no way I was gonna live till Friday. Dicky was all speechless and he finally goes "Hey, Benny, thanks for helpin' me again. You're the only one who's ever trusted me." I just nod again but what the hell, Dicky was a good shit and anyone except Frank who ever met him after he got out of the can could tell he was alright.

As you can see, Frank never killed me. That Friday, the day Frank usually did his dirty laundry, the feds got a warrant to search the El Paradiso and they raided the place. I was just servin' drinks like I always done when the feds come in and shut everything down. From where I was, it seemed that Frank was willin' to just let the search go on and talk his way out of it later. I was scared out of my mind because he kept lookin' over at me and I was sure he was gonna blame the drugs in there on me like he did to Dicky. All the sudden, though, that moron, Joey Camara, seein' the feds as he come out of the john, takes his piece out and starts shootin'. All the guests and the staff hit the ground but it was a blood bath anyway. Joey, Frank, a bunch of Frank's guys, and a bunch of them feds got killed.

The El Paradiso was closed down after that and me and my wife moved up here to New York and I been servin' drinks here ever since. Dicky and them colored guys went to try their luck on the West coast and I hear they did OK. I ain't seen 'em since but someone from the old neighborhood told me they put out a record so I special ordered it. It ain't bad. Whenever I listen to it I can still see Dicky just standin' there on the stage at the El Paradiso, singin' like he's all alone.

9/9/99

Night One—
Won the glance of the naked
Dancing girl with my nervous,
Feminine, seated-stance
On the creamy leather couch by the
Shiny baby grand,
Next to the 3 waiter-boys from
Rick's Cafe who were enjoying
Her stares and vivacious smiles,
Flirtations they thought were
Directed in their direction,
But really, her eyes were for me.

Night One—
Won the chance to go
Home with the sexy
Dancing girl whose eye
I had caught, whose legs had
Laid out over mine as she asked
For my phone number,
After asking if I had a girlfriend and
Whether or not I wanted one.

Morning after Night One—
Won, no, shared a kiss with the now
Fully-clothed dancing girl, sprawled
Across her leather couch as I
Knelt near her, nervous and shaking,
5 hours of talking and laughing only
Before this kiss.
"Just because she's a stripper doesn't mean
She's easy."

Official Date One—
A Tuesday.
She picked me up
(In a rainbow-stickered Hyundai)
To the Fowler House for dinner,
Then to Club Café with
The music of our school-girl giggles

Filling the car.
Comfortable company,
Sparking chemistry.

Ending in her car, outside
My house (nowhere
Near the strip club,
Very close to her full-time,
Society-appropriate job
For a college graduate of 25),
We embraced with a drunken,
Passionate hour-long kiss.

Day after Official Date One—
She kissed my lips hello,
Sprawled out on my bed and
Let her hair dance through
Her fingers and in her face
As she told me,
Breathless,
Told me she was still in love
With her ex-girlfriend.

Nights Two through Thirty-Three—
Was it a mistake:
To sleep beside her, holding her,
her not holding me;
To continue talking to her,
7,8,9 times daily
(she was calling me);
To bring her a rose and a sunflower
when I meet her for coffee;
To spend 2 hours making chicken, penne,
and broccoli and baking cookies (from scratch)
to bring to her on her lunch break;
To drop off yellow roses (her favorite)
at the strip club, to make her smile;
To buy her toothpaste and Q-tips
when I see that she has run-out;
To get up early and sneak out, to surprise her
with breakfast when she wakes up;
To bring her a bottle of wine and a chocolate
rose on the one month anniversary of Night One;
To allow her to meet my parents and for her to charm

them and them to love her;
To bring her a dozen roses when I meet her for a lunch drink just because;
To accept her request to slow dance with me, three times, on a straight boat cruise, allowing the world to see who I am;
To share a kiss every time we leave each other, sometimes on the cheek, sometimes on the lips, sometimes for more than a second;
To pretend it's Ok that she still loves her ex, but spends all her time with me;
To tell her I'm willing to wait for her as long as it takes, as long as she wants;
To act like it's Ok, when on day 34 or something, she tells me of the $300 worth of presents she bought her ex;
To go along with her notion that we are "just very good friends;"
To put my life on hold, for her,
For the possibility of her.

Mistake One—
Falling in love with the naked dancing girl.

Nicole Clark

Estate Sale

I wander...

a stranger in this house of death

peering at possessions…

remnants of

one who has passed on

a life and time that has passed by.

The smell of stale permeates

what once was sacred space.

To the question "who were you?"

The answer….

like the scent of honeysuckle carried by a light summer breeze,

is whispered silently by abandoned belongings in each room.

The living room….

a wall-to-wall bookcase stuffed end-to-end

with writings ranging from

Whitman to Walker

Keats to Kenyon

a cracked, sunken leather chair at its side, handmade quilt at its back.

You were a lover of words, warmth, and

the passing of quiet hours.

The dining room....

gauzy lace curtains grace its filmy windows

a matching lace draped mahogany table,

empty crystal bowl on top, commands the room.

On the far wall a congested hutch

filled with evidence of entertaining

tea-stained china cups, chipped china plates,

a carnival glass vase.

You were a pleaser of palates and

hostess to tea-drenched conversation.

The bedroom.....

faded floral wallpaper and table-top Victorian lamp

the only evidence of its novel charm,

now usurped by a naked hospital bed and bedside commode,

tools of your once lingering life.

A grainy black and white photo catches my eye from the dusty dresser.

A youthful, carefree woman stares back.

You were well, you were ill, and

now your praised possessions are for sale to strangers.

Seized by the overwhelming connection to your eerie eyes

and unsettled with a sense of speeding time,

I head for the open front door

forfeiting the pursuit of possessions

for a breath of life itself.

Susan Boudreau

*The Editors of the WATERMARK extend their sincere apologies to Peter Birckhead for an editorial mistake in the 1999 edition: the second half of Mr. Birckhead's poem was omitted. We are reprinting the poem in its entirety.

Spoon-fed

Patches of white — doctors and nurses — hover
in the ether above. The world
is swimming in darkness.
Voices poke and prod with facts
and data outside my senses.
The surface has been reversed and slips inward.

Fate's swivel brings me closer to stillness,
where the earth is slanted and veers towards its rim;
gravity lends an ear, and I float
between points unseen in the mosaic
of consciousness.

Blindness lifts its tattered veil and reveals
sutures and incisions, broken bones and double vision,
the sad down-strokes of life's back-peddling.
Everyone says how much better I'm looking —
the entire catalog of well-wishers that softens
the landing with kisses and forgiveness.

Everything is forgotten, the accident was a dream —
clouded and dense. I rest and re-situate,
following all the right angles
of the doctor's straight lines. On the bedside table
a pushpin fastens the maps and legends of re-entry —
my way back into the world.

* * *

I lost four days in Canada to a moose.
Permanence became a shadow-play
flickering behind a screen without light.
The deforestation of memory never stops
loading its empty boxes into oblivion.

I watched the Olympics—
boxing, running, and swimming—
and called my lover another woman's name.
Friends, whom I couldn't recognize,
wheeled me around the hospital
in a one-size fits all gown
that barely covered my ass,
wondering at the subtlety of surfaces
in a human brain.

They started me off on the alphabet, counting
backwards, and primary colors. The first
steps of cloud-break reverberated in my desire
for homefries and blueberry pancakes,
wakefulness and Tamar's half-moon belly,
and finally, there was the pull and retreat
of language's echo filling my mouth
with the appropriate works of recognition.

Peter Birckhead

"Marie #1"
Holga Camera / Gelatin Silver Print
Anne Raisner

"Marie #2"
Holga Camera / Gelatin Silver Print
Anne Raisner

"Marie #3"
Holga Camera / Gelatin Silver Print
Anne Raisner

"Marie #4"
Holga Camera / Gelatin Silver Print
Anne Raisner

David Fernandez

There You Are

They never told me I would be a shadow, mama never said, "Boy, do you know the importance of shadows?" Papi never said it, or even realizes that he still is one – even all the way where he is now. Sometimes I have a dream (as mystics and psycho-analysts would say), a recurrent lucid dream, that I'm walking along barren streets in my neighborhood. Trees without leaves are sparsely scattered here and there, and hanging off their branches are beer bottles and cans, that the local corner-huggin' hangouts think are, not funny and festive. Then, the first thing I do when I wake is take a look out the window and realize that it ain't Christmas, then say to myself, shit it should be, 'cause my ass is freezin', at some point mama cuts in and says, "Boy, you better shut that window, we don't pay heart for all of New York, you hear me?" I look, and look and sure enough out some the junkies, 6 a'clock first thing. I used to bob and weave through the multitudes of those muthafucka's, cause damn if mama ever found out that I was dealin'-- not a happy thought. Don't get me wrong, it's not that I was trying to avoid them all that much, it's just that my crack dealin's were extra-curricular--meaning when mom was at work.

Washington Heights is full of Dominicans and that's where I see most of the shadows that mama and papi and my brother don't talk about. I mean I'm walking up Audubon Ave. towards Broadway maybe hoping to make the "A" train in Fort Washington, before it takes off without me. Just before making it anywhere near there, I see St. Nicholas Avenue, on a really, really brightly-lit morning, this is where the sun has a clear path through the buildings, 'cause the avenue's as wide as Hell, like one of them four-lane divided highways in Massachusetts where concrete teenagers get their drunk asses concretely killed. There are some shadows walking in a frenzy, making their way in and out of Bodegas, stuffing their three small children in their stolen shopping carts, having used the last of the food stamps. The procession of another funeral ends, probably someone I knew; died on four-lane St. Nick shot by a rival, I gotta be careful, in this frenzy that could be –
"Freeze!" shouted from the distance.
Damn, my ass is always freezin'; all of a sudden the sound track in my head turns into Chariots of Fire
"Fuck you, you five-o," and I bolt.
"Don't move!"

Cops are persistent, but not too bright 'cause, of course, I'm movin'! Mama would do twice the damage of any cop if I were caught, so hell yeah I'm movin'! Police in the Heights are used to spotting shadows, especially mine. So I'm, shall I say, Audi 5000, that's ghetto for, peace, see ya' later. But, he'll chase me no matter what, and for all his leg length and determination, not today, no not today.
"Stop right there!" he says just as I reach the corner.
"Just give it up, Flannagan!"
He's out of breath, he's a giant of a man and always wears the same old three piece pin-stripe, like some Charlie's Angels, 70's detective. He has the scent of Stetson, mixed with sweat and that moldy cement holding cell smell. We go way, way back, me and Flannagan, I've had too many face encounters with his gruff beard and his stiff, white knuckles pressed against my face, that and the memory of mama keep me runnin'. I'm losing life too, there's only so much sprinting I can do, before it turns into slow motion – I'll hit him if I have to.

There's an alleyway just around this bend on 175th and Broadway, a basement area behind the scenes. Me, Michael and Rafael used to take girls back there to make-out (and then some) when we were kids, it serves as one of the top 10 hiding places on my list. It's this little cubby-hole entrance, between two building that lead into a four years of trash and junkies all hungry for that hit, the spice of life. Sure enough, nobody. The place is empty, due to the last raid, except for a darkly cloaked individual in a corner and vials that cover the asphalt in pretty pinks and bloods reds.
"Hi handsome, you got, you got?" In the raspiest phlegm afflicted voice, although she struck some note, some octave in her voice sounded incomprehensibly familiar.
"Got what?"
"Some…ya know." Immediately sirens are blazing deep in my head, she's a crack-whore.
"What do you know, huh? You know me!"
"Don't worry 'bout the DT I heard him run past here. ow the fuck did she know he was chasing me?
"What you runnin' from?"
"Cops."
"What you runnin' from…you can tell me." She sounded comforting, the phlegm from her throat began to loosen.
"Listen, I ain't talkin' to you, I'm just hiding 'til it's-"
"Come on," she said.
It couldn't have sounded more sincere than if it were comin' straight outa mama's own mouth, and I couldn't help but be attracted to her voice. It didn't help that she was covered in rags shielding herself from the cold, but as the intrigue grew, so did my willingness to protect her

from winter.
"I'm just trying to make the A."
"Where you goin'...school?"
"No."
"Aren't ya' still in-?"
"Yeah, I'm just"-
"It's rock in-it? That's why he's after you."
"For a base-head you sure ask a lot of question."
(Intently staring at the top of her skull, maybe that's what makes it easy to stare).
The stare is returned. Thirty seconds of eternity pass. In it's wake, the lasting memory of immortality. Now the pressure and, almost embarrassment, set in.
"Who are you" I asked.
"Someone who done fucked up...So, you ain't got nothin' for me, huh?"
I started to feel this pain somewhere in my brain, like a struggle had already begun between logic and the wells of tears screaming to break out of my eyes. I find myself looking around everywhere trying to distract myself from her neediness, her patheticness and her face. Slowly turning, I notice that light is trying to break the apartment buildings' surroundings. It's all in vain. Not a shadow in sight. I could barely see myself and her.
"No, They're after me for somethin' they think I did, but I ain't dunnit, and I ain't even runnin' from that either...what you runnin' from?" This vague grin coming from a raise on her left cheek, giving me an indication that she thought my question amusing and, of course, unoriginal. Well, fuck it, if she wants to play Good cop, Bad cop, I'll play too!
"Like I said, I dun messed up...been runnin' and it ain't no place to go."
She continues, "I got two kids, and they is orphans, the social worker took them."
For the first time I notice her eyes. Dark brown and glossy as all hell, who knows? Maybe it's 'cause of her kids, although she seems to have forgotten herself, like someone cut her strings or somethin'. Now, she just goes about her days crouching in corners, lifeless and apathetic.
"I ain't runnin' no more."
Right there I notice a beam of light, warming her face; it's pale as if she no longer casts a shadow, her skin is white, yet she don't speak it. The city and the sky scrapers have stripped her of her shadows. And, even though, all the suppleness that would make her foxy brown is drained, she can't be but in her mid-thirties.
"That's fucked up, it ain't right...ya' know, they say, I was at this jam on 193rd where some punk-ass nigga got hisself shot, and I keep tellin' them where I was, but it ain't no use, that punk is dead, and they don't care except but to put me six feet deep, like his ass. It ain't no use.
She sends me the expression on her face just before she puts it down, an

indifference almost like she's disappointed, slowly nodding her head, staring hard at the concrete; packaged in her eyes, stamped and sent directly into mine. My heart in my throat. Damn, she knew something, I mean, she had to know something. This woman-mother had all the answers mama didn't have.
"Come on, over here," she motioned with her head. By this point, I don't give a shit if she's Jeffrey Dahmer, dressed like my Latin junkie queen; I move. Her motioning hand is frantic as if to say, "Lookit what I got, lookit what I got."
Reaching in the layers of rags, she pulls out this plastic picture holder (the kind that comes in a wallet), in it, two pictures of two boys.
"That's my oldest boy, Jesus," the photo of a boy and his reflective profile, one a'them pictures your school organizes with a professional photographer, the kind your mama makes you take.
"And this is Diogenes," the younger of the two, in front of a tacky laser background.
"I got these from the social worker last year…I think."
Looking at me with the eyes of my mama she says, "You look like Jesus." It fills me to feel like someone. I know she was talking about her son, but I took it to that next level, and for a moment felt like something more than just a shadow, more like a halo in a haystack.
"I'm gonna make the A train today, I'm runnin', runnin' away from my mama, the cops and New York." Before I even finish my sentence, she's started nodding and speaking to the ground.
"Where you gonna go to?"
It took me a while to even think, not that I didn't know where I was goin' or nothin' just kept on in my mind 'bout that murder they wanted to stick me with. How I knew I was a thousand miles away, just hangin' with a bunch a my boys down in 155th, drinking forties and spittin' on the Incarnation Church steps (for fuckin' with my head and my body).
"My father lives in Boston somewhere, I don't know where, but if I can make it on the next train, then I'll catch a bus."
Maybe I'd find him. I'd find him and perhaps he'd care and answer all the questions that I'd thought of since the day he left, 10 years ago, when I was nine. Questions, not even this woman could answer.

I don't have a watch, even though I should, and I know that the time has flown right by me. Can't tell the time. In the distance I hear all kinds of sirens sounding, it's part of the harmony of New York, the only problem is you can never tell when those sirens are for you, or just somebody like you.
"You're a good boy, yo' mama must be proud."
I hear the crackin' of vials beneath feet, in the foreground of sirens' warnings still in the background.
"Drugs is bad for you…you hear me," she said, as I vaguely paid atten-

tion, only hearing the crushing sound closing in.
"Yeah…then how come you a junkie?"
"You can't go nowhere, stop runnin', boy."
"Whatcha talkin' about now?" Louder and louder.
"It ain't no place to go!"
"I can go to Boston, maybe your kids have a chance too, sometime in life."
"Ain't no chances, no runnin' away from yo' shadow, boy, it's who you are!"
Her words, a judgement, swift and painless. She's fiendin' for her fix? Her body jerking about, underneath the cloth. Passion is growing, or maybe tension, or maybe both. Still, she's sittin', probably can't stand on her own two feet.
"STOP TALKIN' SHIT!"
"I ain't never met a man can escape, boy!"
"Listen, you fiend, I'm outa he-"
"DON'T MOVE!!!" from a distance, shouted in true familiarity. Everything screaming it's highest pitch, the sirens, the pigeons scattering somewhere far, but everything close, even the loud silver shimmer of his gun. Shadows up against the twisted court yard walls, with every other revolution of the blues and blood lights.
"Run…run boy," same lifted left cheek; ready to laugh.
"STAY RIGHT WHRE YOU ARE!!"
Rumble in my intestine, an intense ache in my heart as it tries to beat itself out of its own walls. Trying to get myself to move, but the searing pain in my left leg just under my knee withers me and I lay in a puddle of blood sifting through vials.
"You have to the right to remain silent…"
Even though I couldn't see, I knew there was a stretcher involved, more lights at night, especially the spotlight of the ambulance on my face, the beam hauled in by its brightness and abducted from the scene of my crime. I can see she's standing in it just ahead where once the beam was on me. Pigs to the left of me, paramedics to the right and my Latin junkie woman standing (no longer paralyzed) just outside. The engine's always on in ambulances; just before the doors close I barely hear her whisper, "No matter where you go…" doors slam shut and off I go. Here I am.

The Day's Light Hides the Night

Fortunately, the light of day conceals the night,
that is, until you arrive at our door.
Then your night starts to leak into my light.

The other day I went to fly your dragon kite,
and I watched it eat up the sky as it soared.
At that moment, the light of day concealed my night.

But when you saw me return without fright,
it wasn't long before you pushed my cheek against the floor.
Why does your night leak into my light?

The next morning my face was a sight
so you gave me a massage, avoiding where I was sore.
At that moment, the light of day concealed my night.

But later when you came back with your face all red and tight,
you took all you wanted while my new dress tore.
Your night leaks into my light.

Can you please stop looking at me from your height?
I am tired of finding myself on the floor.
I try to make my light of day conceal the night,
but your night keeps leaking into my light.

Katherine J. Hunter

Vignette: Dancers

Scott McLachlan

In the dim, dirty cellar the boiler rumbles to jazz, seeping through the creaking floor boards from above. "Shit," Daniel says, tossing a tattered boot across the room. "Hey, Ma, where is it? I can't find it," but there's only a piano solo, ending a song, in reply.

He stands, feeling his jaw with the back of his fingers, staring at the junk coming from the nail pocked walls. He sighs and then grasps at his stomach, catching his skin until it pinches back from his hand, ruffles his hair and looks around.

He scrapes out the wooden frame of a garden chair and then climbs over it to get to a pile that's grown in the rear corner.

Tennis rackets clatter on the concrete floor, a few magazines rustle out of their cardboard box and an old rabbit cage clanks down the pile as Daniel searches roughly through it. "Damn crap," he mutters and kicks the pile and then looks through it again.

Natalie startles him, having come quietly down from the kitchen, when she asks him how he's getting on.

"Oh, just great."

"Don't be so cross," Natalie says. Daniel smells the kitchen she's drawn with her: the hazelnuts in the mazurek, the red wine sauce with the roast, cake batter, vanilla and onions all mingled into one sweetness, disturbing the dark cellar.

He looks at her and a song is and another begins to be but he turns back to the piles and asks her what she wants.

"Come on now," she says softly. "I can get rid of your bad mood."

"Yeah, but when you leave it'll be back."

"Nope. I'll fix it. Let's dance."

"Dance?"

"Yeah," she says, touching his hand.

"I don't like to dance."

"You dance with me at parties all the time."

"Na," Daniel says, slipping his hand from hers. "I'm just rubbing you up then," and turns to rummage again.

night neighbor

in the naked
window frame
a hundred yards away
up the hill beyond
the house—on my deck
i see you silhouette
emblazed by
light behind

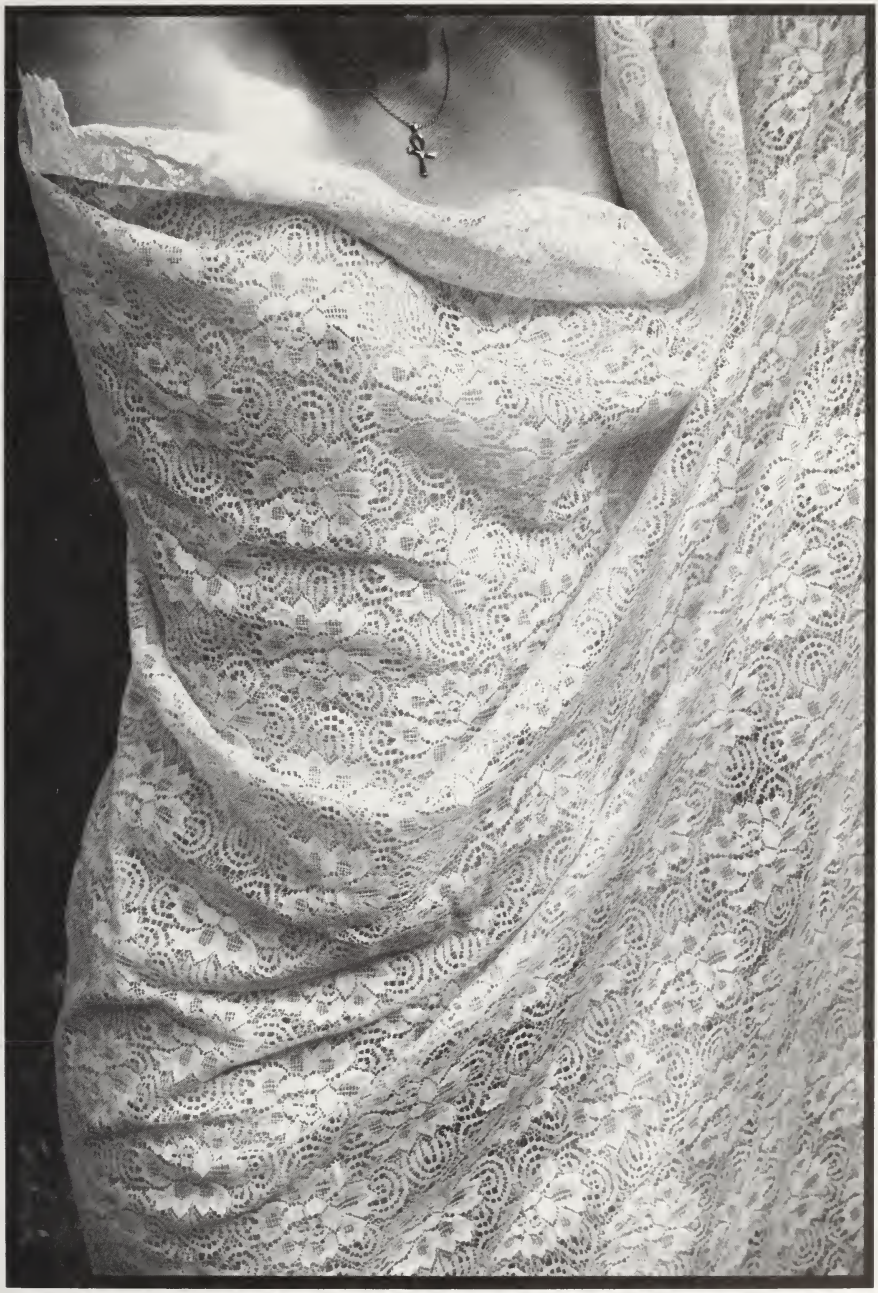
would you like another glass
of wine
sure why not
if you are having one
we'll enjoy this night
perhaps more
more i want to know

seeing you reframed
veiled by voile
gliding by your window
revealing so much so much
more

good—
night neighbor

john juncker

"Untitled"
Gelatin Silver Print
Isabella Podjarski



"Robin"
Gelatin Silver Print
Samantha Palmer

Debbie Fricke

FORGIVING FATHER

About five years ag —just after the New Year celebrating was over — I got a letter from my father. Since he lived in Kingston, New York and I in Somerville, Massachusetts, our communication was mostly via letter, with a few phone calls added in and even fewer personal visits. Dad and I were having one of the many letter--writing battles we had come to expect from each other over the years. Unknown to me at the time, though, this was the last letter I would receive from him.

We engaged in combat frequently and it was expected, while so engaged, that we would deliver letter bombs in an attempt to blow each other out of the water. "Fire at will" was the only unspoken rule of a war which could never really have been won by either of us. I would always duck when incoming landed in my mailbox, not knowing what to expect but remaining hopeful that my last bomb brought him to his knees, waving a white flag. Hunkered down in the bunker of my apartment I would read the words that would wound me—pierce my heart—while mentally preparing my next attack. Once my bomb had been loaded and all was placed on paper, I would fire away. Then I would sit back and wait once again for the retaliatory bomb to be delivered, hoping—always hoping—that I said something in my bomb to win the war, or at least the latest battle.

At some point during the battle it usually became clear on some deep, subconscious level that the war was not going to be won with letter bombs and that one of us—meaning me—was going to have to surrender. Peace negotiations would begin, a treaty eventually signed and all would be quiet between us until something would cause the next eruption and the cycle would repeat itself over and over and over again. Just what that "something" would be was always so unpredictable.

It was a silly and tiring game but it was a major component to our relationship; in fact, it was the only way we knew to relate to each other. It was at best uncomfortable and at times excruciatingly painful but neither of us changed the familiar rules of the familiar game. In retrospect neither of us knew the rules *could* be changed or would have had a clue as to *how* to change them. So we continued on and on and on year after year after year after year — that is until I received this one particular letter bomb in January of 1994.

As usual, I retrieved the explosive device from my mailbox, feeling waves of fear, resignation and hope. I entered my apartment, kicked off my wet boots, threw my pocketbook and keys down on the kitchen table, flung my wet, heavy coat over a chair and poured a shot of

straight Southern Comfort – neat. Before opening the envelope I took in a mouthful of amber liquid and pushed it down my throat. Liquid courage. I opened the envelope and began reading his chicken scratch . It was basically more of the same old shit, until he called me pitiful and incapable of being able to forgive him. The former was a new and improved accusation which penetrated my heart deeper than any of his insults had in a seemingly long time. The latter, however, was something that he had been throwing at me for a long, long time; it was a very old and very worn out accusation. The only difference was that this time he followed up his hit with clear cut, easy-to-follow, how-to-bring-about-peace instructions: "I suggest you look the word 'forgiveness' up in the dictionary and then discuss it with your pastor." I was more than slightly annoyed. How many times have I told him? He obviously hasn't been listening to me because I told him countless times that I *don't* believe in organized religion any longer, haven't stepped foot in a so-called house of God in eons, nor would I be caught *dead* conferring with a clergy person. After I stopped laughing at the poor bastard for being so purposefully clueless about who I was becoming as an individual, I realized for the first time how important it was to my father that he somehow feel forgiven by me. I also began to slowly realize how equally clueless *I* was about the subject.

It was snowing like crazy outside. We were having the kind of storm where an icy, bitter-cold wind whips snowflakes around in a mad, confused flurry. Eventually the snowflakes would settle on the ground, accumulating into annoying mounds that demanded my energy and attention—especially if I wanted to go someplace; inside I couldn't get warm, no matter how much Southern Comfort I drank.

Forgive and forget was one of my father's favorite mantras growing up. Whenever he did something he was particularly ashamed of—like giving my Mom a black eye—he would go to everyone individually and apologize. The problem was that nothing ever changed. He would lie, cheat, beat or just be a low-down asshole, apologize and keep right on doing or saying whatever it was. It took a long time for me get to the point where I could tell myself that I shouldn't believe my Daddy's apologies any longer.

When he did apologize, I would say "that's OK," or something equally dismissive. It made me so uncomfortable to have my father apologize to me for something he did to someone else; I never really knew *what* to say to him. He never, of course, apologized to me for the things he said and did to me. If he had, I doubt I would have known how to respond. "That's OK," would have been a lie. The truth was I was storing secret weapons deep inside of myself. Every incident slowly and painfully destroyed my fantasy that he would one day don his armor of shiny silver, mount his white stallion, pick up his lance and come to rescue me, his favorite damsel in distress. The hate, anger,

resentment and disappointment continued to stack itself layer upon layer upon layer, until I finally escaped living with him and was able to use it as fuel to fire my paper bombs. The deep, unconditional love the little girl felt for her daddy became buried under mounds of frostier, more damaging feelings.

There's an image that bubbles up in my mind when I think about forgivness. I rise slightly above the forgivee dressed in an all white flowing gown billowing in a slight breeze—like the sail on a boat in the harbor during a lazy, breezy summer evening—and use my blessed right hand to place the sign of the cross over the forgivee's head. Then placing my left hand on the poor soul's head, I utter the words: "You, my child, are forgiven." There now. The forgiver has hereby and forthwith forgiven the forgivee and all is heretofore forgiven and right with the world—right? Somehow I don't think so.

THE BAPTISM

in a half-filled tub of lukewarm water
she spread her legs
open with oil soaked fingers
she stroked
her wet skin
clean of the shame
clothed by cotton and silk
she closed her eyes
and imagined
kissing herself
on the face
lips neck chest
the tips of her breasts
her stomach
navel
slower and lower
she opened O
she kissed
down
to her calves heels and toes
she kissed
up
to the place
her fingers stroked
entering herself
with herself
she shuddered
as her spirit
spoke her name
and anointed
her body

Susan King

Images of Marissa

I
the small brown bear
watches cautiously
as her cubs explore the brush outside the cave

II
a tipi provides surprisingly adequate shelter,
even from raging storms

III
hot, dusty, sticky, parched earth,
jumpy, irritable animals,
even the air seems restless, and then
a quiet rain breaks

IV
the full moon wears a veil of thin clouds;
it draws my soul like a moth

V
a giant oak supports my back
as I lie in its shade

VI
the sea takes the sun into itself

VII
a breeze carrying an Otherworldly scent,
almost like woodsmoke in Autumn,
lifts my hair and spirit to dance in its wind

VIII
the warmth and light of the bonfire
dance with the figures around it

IX
the spelt and barley bread our ancestors ate,
and warm, sweet oat milk,
welcome sources of strength and nourishment

X
illumination from the firedrake
replaces trembling and running
with the firm stance
of the inspired warrior

XI
the earth that we work and dig
smells of creation

XII
a heavy cloak gives solid protection
from harsh weather;
like a womb, it enfolds a small body
in warmth and comfort

XIII
Demeter would do anything to get her daughter back,
even stop the crops from growing

Caera Aislingeach

Dammit I'm in Love Again

I put it down to leave it behind, but it got up
and followed right on my heels; I try
running as fast as I can, stopping short, changing direction –
it ends up in front of me, smiling and waiting

I walked inside it
without watching where I was going,
then the door locked behind me
and disappeared;
I'm thinking of jumping out the window

I stepped in it,
it stuck to my shoe, and when I try to shake it off
it just gets all over everything

it latched onto my body somewhere,
and I can feel the drain from its constant sucking,
but I can't pry it off

I jumped off it to get away,
and a huge bungy-cord held on
and pulled me back

it lodged itself in my brain;
I try to think and all I get
is the same fantasies and daydreams
over and over like a pop song on a bad radio station
and I can't shut it off

Caera Aislingeach

"Mother & Child"
Oil
Sunil Gulab

"Candle Light"
Acrylic on Canvas
Josephine Bottari

"Purple Reflections"
Acrylic on Canvas
Josephine Bottari

"Trees in the Breeze"
Acrylic on Canvas
Josephine Bottari

"Red Embrace"
Acrylic on Canvas
Josephine Bottari

"The Kiss"
Acrylic, Pen, Ink, & Watercolor on Canvas
Nicholas Zaremba

"Thinker"
Acrylic, Pen, & Ink on Canvas
Nicholas Zaremba

"Big Black"
Acrylic
Nate Brown

"TV Head"
Linoleum Print
Nate Brown

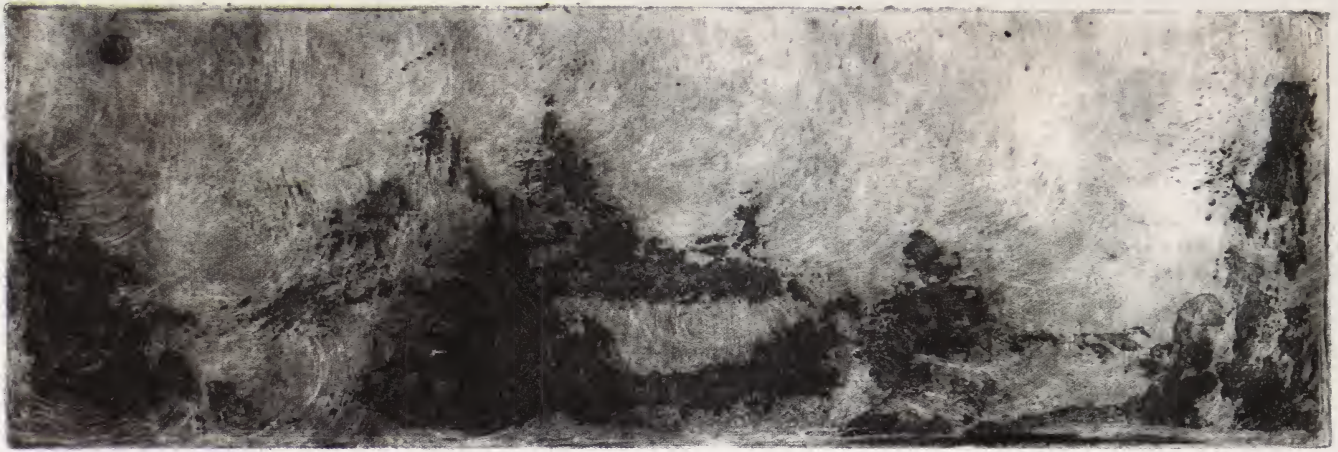
"Untitled"
Linoleum Print
Nicole Lyons

"Untitled"
Linoleum Print
Shane D. Parsons

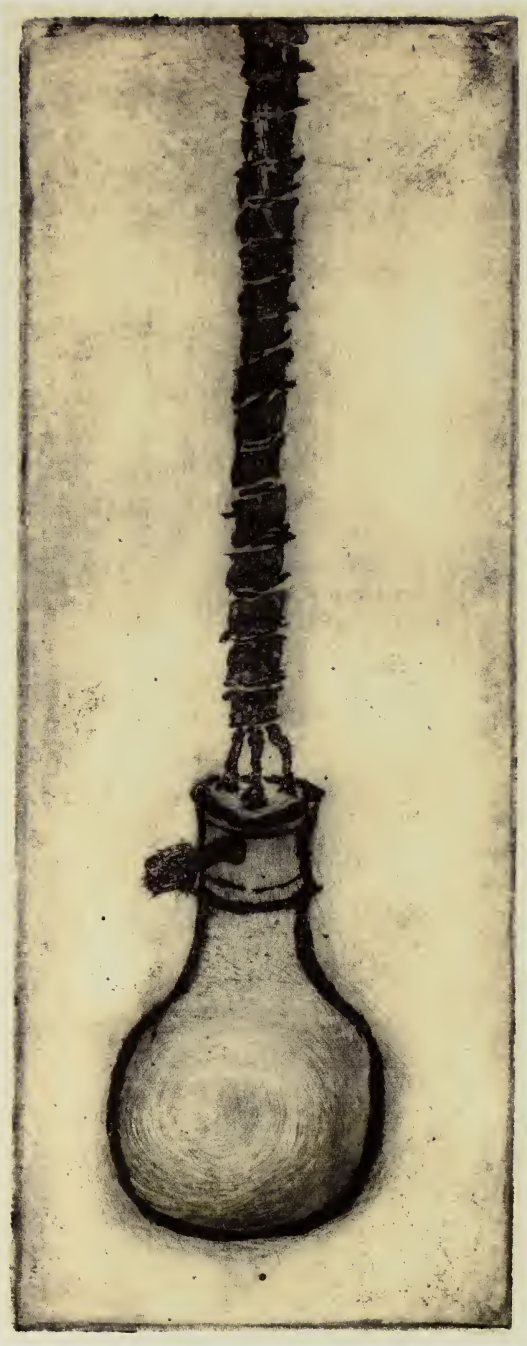
"Killer"
Linoleum Print
Polly Shindler

"Giant"
Linoleum Print
Polly Shindler

"Flushed"
Etching
Nicole Lyons



"Thunder"
Etching
Nora Tengtrakool



"Basement Apartment"
Etching
Nate Brown

Jacqueline Powers

Outside-Forces-Out-Of-Their-Control-Intervened

On Route 3, fifty miles southeast of Boston, is an artificial channel, built in the early 1900's. It took men and mules ten years to cut through the narrow strip of land that joined Cape Cod to the mainland of Massachusetts. The Cape Cod Canal is a navigational canal, linking Cape Cod Bay with Buzzards Bay. Its purpose—to shave 70 miles off the trip of tankers, barges, luxury cruise ships and private boats, as they travel from Boston to New York City. It's also the landmark that transformed a cultural and environmental truth into a visible and physical reality—Cape Cod is as separate from mainland Massachusetts as any island in the Atlantic or Pacific.

Massachusetts has its own distinct physical characteristics on a map. By starting on the westerly border and traveling east, you will trace the boundaries of a small, sturdy, solid, boxy state. As you reach its most eastern border you will see the Cape. Like a finger of God sticking out into the depths of the Atlantic, it dares the forces of nature to test her. When the canal was dug, it drew a watery boundary between the physical characteristics of two distinct environments and people whose natures mirror them.

The Sagamore and the Bourne bridges are the links that connect the Cape and the rest of the Commonwealth. The first time I crossed one of those old metal erector sets, I felt as if I had entered the flip side of my home ground--and I was right. Once you stand on the Cape side of this great man-made waterway, you've entered another civilization, one that is physically, economically and culturally separate from the rest of its home state. Those who cross over to visit see ocean, beaches, restaurants, gift shops and harbors. Those who stay see the simplicity, the independence, the strength, the humor and the determination of the people who enjoy challenges their environment presents each day—challenges that would send many running back to the city. I am one of those who stayed.

I was introduced to Cape society and its culture sixteen years ago by my husband, a native Cape Codder and a commercial lobster boat captain. He would never call himself a native. If you're "local," you never make a point of it. Being married to one "true Cape-folk," gives one an advantage in understanding the dynamics of the "Capeism" culture. You can remain detached because you can never truly belong to the native family, but you have a front row seat to the show. And what a

show it is.

There are three levels of society on the Cape. On the highest rung of the cultural step ladder are the Capies. They are the born-here-raised-here-lived here-through hurricane-and so natives. They wear "Don't sweat the small stuff, cause it's all small stuff" attitude like a tourist wears a Cape Cod T-shirt and a baseball hat with a "can't ignore, red velour," stuffed lobster sewn strategically on its lid. Capies have been known to bury their money in coffee cans in the back yard because they don't trust the government or banks. They live in quaint, old, ramshackle houses that are five feet from the road, with worn out back porches and front doors that are never used. They're adverse to change, but will accept it when outside-forces-out-of-their-control intervene.

Twenty years ago a local family in my neighborhood decorated a spruce tree with blue Christmas lights. They never took them off. They just added more lights to the bottom of the tree as it grew in size. A few years ago, I noticed that their traditional addition to the holiday lighting ceremonies was missing. The one blue Christmas tree among the neighborhood of tasteful white lights was dark and silent. Finally, my curiosity won out and I asked what happened to their lights. "Someone stole them," was their unemotional reply—outside-forces-out-of-their-control-intervened.

Locals don't usually marry outside of the familiar group. If they do, suspicion and ridicule may follow the happy couple for some time. Introductions like, "I like you to meet my wife," are followed by, "Where did you find her?" and "I guess he couldn't find anyone on the island to marry him, he had to go over the bridge." Among natives there is a bit of shame connected to, "going over the bridge," to find what you need. These words of shame are spoken out loud, of course, at high enough decibel to be heard by everyone. A Cape Cod eccentricity: what native Cape Codders think is usually only seconds away from their lips. "Saves time, you know," they reason. One never wonders what a native Cape Codder thinks of you. Just ask. They will be happy to tell you.

If you hear someone talking about a "Cape Cod traffic jam," you know they are not native. Locals never talk about the traffic because they would not be caught dead in it. Locals know all the side, back and dirt roads; they know every alternate, substitute and makeshift route. If there is no route, they will make one. If necessary, natives will travel miles in the opposite direction of their destination just to reach a short cut. They never worry about a traffic jam on the bridges because they rarely feel the need to use them.

A sub-culture of the local native is found among the members of the commercial fishing fleet. These independent, head-strong and intrepid band of waggish individuals portray the spirit of the Cape. Since they also like to be anonymous, I will use fictitious names to tell my story. I met "Elton Smith" a short time after I entered this compli-

cated society. "Elton" has lived and fished on the Cape his whole life. He owned a thirty-six foot lobster boat named "Sheryl Ann."

"I named it after my wife. I built it three years ago, in the spring. All my other boats...I named them after my two daughters. You never name a fishing vessel somethin' you might have to change. It's bad luck. When I built the 'Sheryl Ann,' my wife and I been married for thirty years. I just figured it was safe to name it after 'er."

It did not pass my notice that the first boat my husband purchased after our marital union was named after out daughter, Jessica Lynne. Three years ago, he built a new vessel, a marvelous structure that took a half year and fifteen trips to Northern Maine to build. As captain and owner, he painstakingly picked out every little detailed component of her construction personally. When she was finally finished, there was great consternation and personal examination around naming of this vessel. At the last moment before her documentation, he chose to name her after me, the "Jacqueline Suzanne," "Jackie Sue," to his comrades. Names that I almost lost out to—The Boat, Die-Nasty (a take on Dynasty), Endeavor and Survivor. Of course, I did come from over the bridge.

The lowest level on the Cape Cod social rung is occupied by visitors, tourists and "summer people," known as the "toureestas." Not a complimentary term when spoken by a true Capie who looks at these foreigners as bumblers. "How can someone need directions to the ocean on a piece of land that is basically an island? Hell, if you travel more than ten minutes North or South, you'll hit salt water." This type of comment is often heard among local hang outs where I am sure the term "toureesta" originated.

"Toureestas" are easily spotted on the Cape, particularly at popular local eateries. "Tourisstas" love to go where the locals go. I experienced a clash of cultures one night at a favorite local ice cream take-out. The parking lot was filled with pick up trucks, a sign of local inhabitation. Local customers were dressed in sweatshirts, always blue, black, or brown: jeans and cut offs, always old, ripped, covered with paint and unfashionably worn, fishing boots, ripped sneakers and work boots, also old, covered with paint, unfashionably worn. Suddenly an invasion occurred. A rather large luxury car arrived. It took up two parking spaces and was filled with the unfamiliar. The invaders made all the mistakes a foreign enemy could, when they are trying to infiltrate alien territory. Their vehicle cost more than the ice cream stand. It was shiny and damage free. All the windows were closed, indicating air conditioning. Once the occupants exited the car, it became tragic. They spoke in loud voices, calling attention to themselves and--all five people were wearing white slacks. They cleared that ice cream stand faster than a dead fish on a pier in one hundred degree heat.

I belong to the final group of Cape society. Diversity reigns here.

Jacqueline Powers

The one thing we have in common is that we want to be perceived as native and never ever admit we were once "toureestas." We are newcomers all whether here for twenty years or one. In the last twenty years the Cape's population had doubled while the rest of the state grew only by six percent. What attracts the masses? In the past it was the challenge of surviving and working on and around the sea, the joy of independent living in small town familiarity. Today what beckons is the "Camelot image" of the Cape as a tourist mecca, retirement community and a vacation playland. Retirees flock here. Vacationers move here. Those who want to live in the idyllic, transfer and commute here. The risktakers still come to try their hand at the old traditions of fishing and farming, but they are fewer in numbers and do not have their father to teach them the history. As the locals age and disappear, this new group of pseudo-natives are taking their place. They may win, just by their sheer numbers.

Change is happening on the Cape but it is still possible to find the traditional native characteristics of a Cape Cod living in the Cape's residents. To stay close to it, I have had to move from a front row seat to the back of the theater. I have to listen and seek it out, because it's quieter than the new ways. While newcomers put Cape Cod license plates on their cars, name their homes "Blue Heaven," and "Seaside Rest," and install backyard pools, "cause the salt water dries out our skin" and "it's too hot at the beach," natives sit back and enjoy the challenge, the beauty, and the opportunity offered to them by what they call "God's country." Forever grateful, they hold onto what they can and accept the changes—outside-forces-out-of-their-control-intervened.

Scott McLachlan

A (not up at arms) Couple

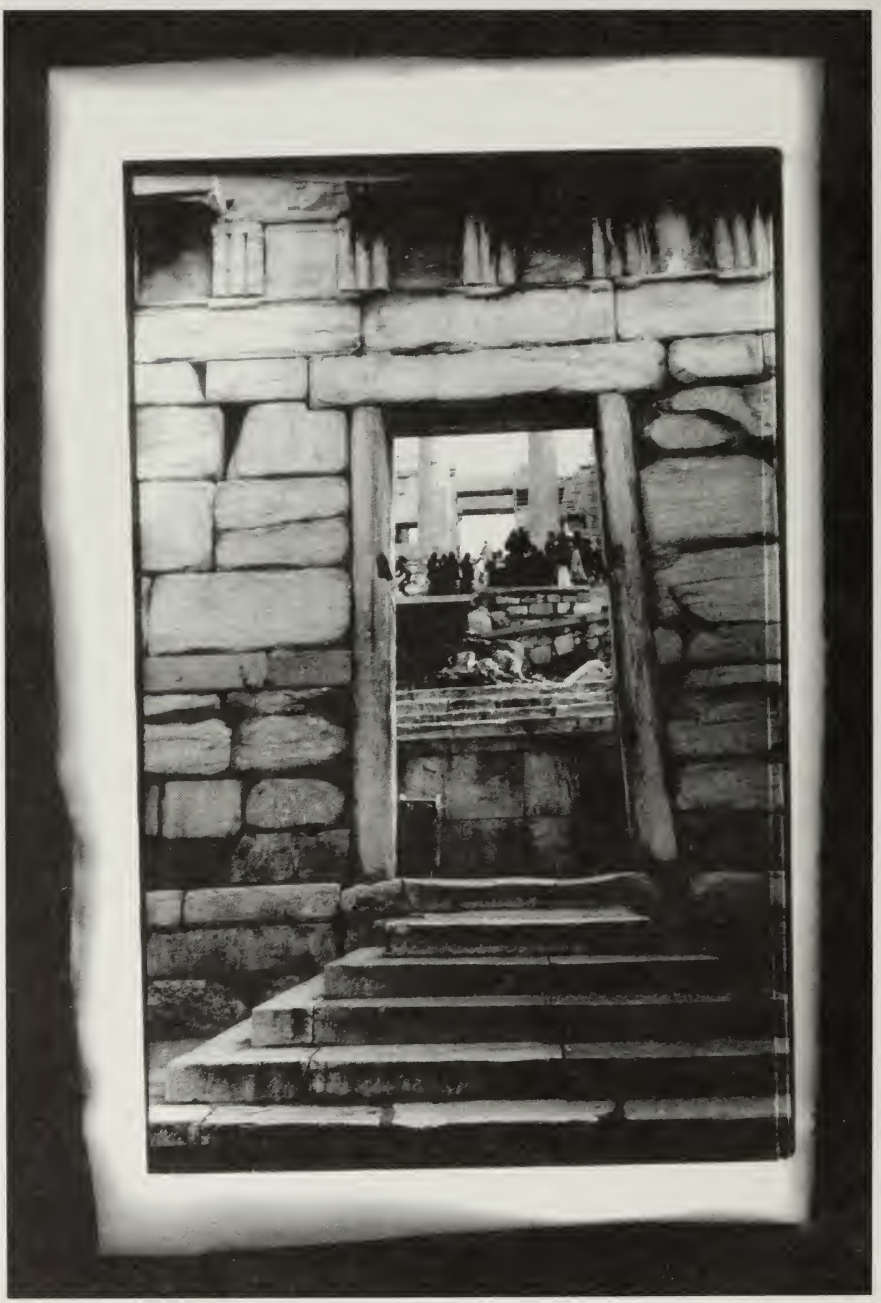
She rolls her back to me, the bed trembling with her pillow-crying. I get up to close the window but don't. Goose flesh bubbles up her damp back. I stand in the purple-papered room with the imitation-wood grandfather clock and wait to cry.

Our clothes are slopped across the wooden floor and lately even our walkways are covered over and we just tramp over it all, wrinkles don't matter. The clock only ticks every fifth second, while outside is very quiet (a billboard buzzes across the street, that the ducks shit on every night as they go I don't know where). The sky is black mud with several crooked silver cuts and I think I'd like to jump out into the darkness but can't see what difference it'd make; then know I won't 'coz we're only on the second floor.

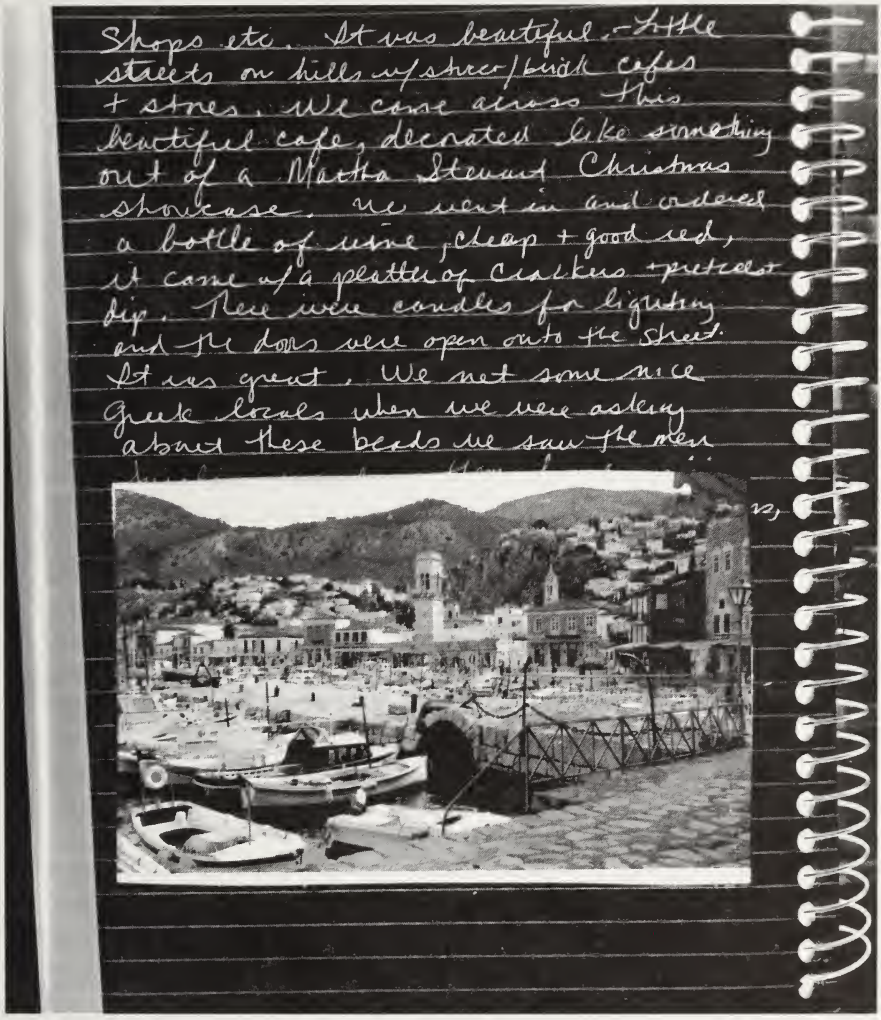
The phone, sunk in clothes by the bed, starts screaming at anyone listening that there's no line and the dial-tone's gotten fed-up and stopped and likewise the recorded operator's voice has tired; it needs shutting off, needs to be hung-up. I wonder why I ever hang the phone up after using it, why anyone ever does; it's not like I want anyone to call.

There's whiskey buried somewhere but I don't think I need it; I can stand here and pretend to be drunk. I suppose there's not much more pretending in it even though I haven't gotten drunk for about a week. It might put me to sleep for a little and let me cry but only tears that don't feel like they've come, 'coz the following night I can't remember if they have or not.

"What then?" I think. And a bed-spring strums. But I stand in the so quiet room and begin to think that I need to scream, to get a little sound going, but then why sound? And I think to turn to look towards the bed, only to stop the thought and watch the clock to see if I can see the minute hand move, but it's already moved from two to six and I didn't see it and so I don't bother watching it anymore.



"Monumental Gateway"
Gelatin Silver Print
Jessica A. Nese



"Island Port with Journal"
Gelatin Silver Print with Transparency Overlay
Jessica A. Nese

Anne Foye

The Black Box

I'm five and a half years old, on a Saturday afternoon, kneeling in a dark corner facing the wall with all the drapes drawn and no lights on and I begin to go over in my head what I will miss most about not having a mother. The first thing I will miss about not having my mother is homemade oatmeal bread. Not just the taste and feel of the first warm and chewy slice melting in my mouth with the butter, but the smell of it baking. A sweet smell with a touch of damp earth hidden in it like when you pick daisies and you pull too hard and they come out of the ground with their roots covered in dirt. The smell of oatmeal bread is a smell that says to me, as I come up the backstairs into the kitchen, she's home. No matter what Dad's up to tonight it's gonna be all right because she's home.

Then there is her voice that sometimes scolded us, sometimes screamed at the old washing machine when the clothes got torn up in it. The steady calm voice that told and read the best stories. She always stopped to turn pages back so that I could look at pictures for the hundredth time. Go over every word and picture in the book again hoping for more time with her before she tucked me in and the lights went out.

When I was sick, her soothing voice could cure me quicker than the St. Joseph's baby aspirin, which I loved the taste of. Sometimes, I'd tell her I didn't feel good just to get the aspirin treat and the touch of her strong, cool hand on my cheek, that could tell my temperature better than any thermometer. She could get me to stop crying by holding back my bangs with one hand, while rubbing little circles around my back with the other, while I pressed my wet face into the wide hip of her homemade madras skirt. Ever since Ma taught me about the word Madras, I thought I smelled India whenever I buried my face in her skirt. The touch of her hand always spoke to me on Friday nights when Dad came home and it wasn't safe to talk. He never broke our code. Two slow pats on the back; stay in the kitchen and keep eating your fish and potatoes in silence. One quick pat on the back; leave that table fast and take the other kids with you. He thought she was only leaning over to dish out more canned peas, as he dished out stories about how hard a week he had on the road.

I think about this on Saturday afternoon, kneeling in a dark corner where I am supposed to pray, facing the wall in a room with all the drapes drawn and no lights on. I'm at my neighbor's house, trying to recite a string of 10 Hail Mary's with no rosary. But I keep hearing Dad's words to my older sisters Kata and Trudy, "Arlene, Matt and Brad are

going to the Du Pres' for the nest three days because they're too young to see the coffin." I don't know what a coffin is, except that Dad said it was a black wood box. I know it had something to do with Ma never coming home again and I know what staying at the Du Pres' means. My two brothers and I pronounce it "Do Prays" because whenever Ma left us there with old Mrs. Du Pres and her old daughter, we prayed all day.

On my twentieth Hail Mary, which is as high as I can count, when the pain in my knees feels like nails shooting through to attach me to the floor, I get a vision of Jesus on his cross and then I see Ma down at Coutu's Funeral home. She's lying in a black box and I'm up here at the "Do Prays" boxed in a black corner praying. And it's just like old Mrs. Do Pray says to us in her broken French accent: "You kids pray for your sins and maybe your mudder will make it to heaven, no?" Through my sinning wickedness, I have killed my mother. Matt and Brad helped out with all the chokecherry and apple fights, biting each other 'til Ma screamed and shook us. They helped, but as I think back to last year when I was four, I knew what had killed her.

She caught me kissing Mark Flambe behind the oil tank. She was so mad she dragged me from the yard into the kitchen by my ponytail, then washed my mouth out with Fels Naptha soap to clean the sin out of me. That was one of the times I didn't like the sound of her voice; it raged at me. "The Lord giveth," Ma said scrubbing the inside of my mouth with the bar of stinging soap, "and the Lord taketh away. Sweet Jesus, Mary and Joseph, please take these sinning ways from my daughter. Arlene you'll be the death of me yet," she said, leaning over me. The heat of her breath in my left ear felt like summer wind blasting through the small sliding back windows of our Ford station wagon that makes all the road noises blur into one roaring sound. I wished that bitter soap would wash the evil out of me but while my ears rang hot with shame, I just kept thinking about those exciting kisses and that I couldn't wait to kiss Mark again. So God took Ma away instead.

Now Ma's dead and I'm at the Do Prays, praying in a dark room, sleeping in a darker room in one bed with my two brothers. My youngest brother is so mad or so sad, I told Mrs. Do Pray, he has just about stopped talking and started peeing the bed. But Mrs. Do Pray said she was ready for that pulling back the white worn out George Washington Style bedspread, like the one Ma told me about on her and Dad's bed. I love helping Ma tuck the soft balled up cotton fabric under her pillows, pretending I was tucking my own baby into bed. When I got into bed, a thin white sheet covered a thick rubber mattress pad making the bed smell like Brownie's Garage and Tire Center where I sometimes fall asleep waiting for Dad to catch up with Brownie over a coupla' Black Labels.

Mrs. Do Pray made us sleep in the bed with only our underwear in case of an accident during the night. This morning, when we woke up

with Matt's damp pee spots on our underpants and tee shirts, Mrs. Do Pray had a steaming hot bath waiting for us. We peeled our smelly undies like we were told. Then she picked each one of us up under the arms and dropped all three of us into the same hot bath water. It burned my skin watermelon pink while my brother's skin turned bright orange. I thought about the day Ma taught me two new words: scald and blanch as she dropped peaches into steaming water to remove the skin from the fruit before she canned it for the winter.

The more I pray in my corner, inside my evil mind, I see that Mrs. Do Pray has left us alone. In my mind I see her walking down to Coutu's to visit Ma who I see lying inside the black box and suddenly remember that American Bandstand is on Saturday afternoon and I want to watch it. I don't care anymore about death and dark and sinning. I want light. I want to get up off my knees and move. If that makes for more sinning or even another death, I don't care right now because that's how bad I feel I need to move. "Hey Matt, I think Mrs. Do Pray is gone. Let's turn on the T.V. I think American Bandstand is on. Let's see." "OK," he says, which is the only word he seems to know how to say anymore. Even though he is younger than me, Ma says he's smart with his hands like I am with words so I just know he can figure out how to turn on the Do Prays' brand-new Zenith. When he turns it on, he blasts the volume. That wakes up my older brother Brad who has been asleep in the corner he kneels in. I tell Matt to leave it up loud because there is nobody around to hear Dick Clark who is smiling at us and welcoming back Chubby Checkers.

The three of us start to twist in that dark living room like Chubby tells us to. We twist round and round and up and down, we twist like we did last summer, we twist like we did last year, we remember when things were really humming and we twist cause twisting time is here. We go round and round and up and down all over the living room. Then, Brad jumps on top of the plastic covered couch and twirls round and round throwing bright-colored crocheted couch cushions at Matt who bats at them with one of Mrs. Do Prays' walking canes. I keep on twisting right along with the girls on American bandstand, copying their moves. Especially the dance steps of the blonde teen that I love to watch every week, with her high teased crown and a ponytail so long, it twitches at the back of her knees when she does the Shimmy.

We twist and shout and I have to have more than just the gray light coming in from the T.V. in the middle of a Saturday afternoon, so I open the dark green velvet curtains with light green swirling roses cut into them. I go around back and push back the white sheets from the huge living room windows because I see that the sun is out. When the sheets are pushed aside, I open the windows to the Saturday afternoon light while my brothers twisting turns into a fistfight. But it doesn't last because as soon as Chubby is done singing, Elvis's "Hound Dog" record

starts playing, which is their favorite because they love to hunt. That was the end of that dark living room for them. Matt pushes me out of the way so that Brad can open the storm window and he jumps right out. Then Brad reaches back and pulls Matt and me out through the window and we tumble onto the frozen brown grass but I don't feel the cold at all, from the twisting.

Carmella Roy Kearsley

The Mirror in the Cellar

I studied the face reflected in the mirror, hanging on the rough whitewashed wall next to the homemade shower stall, and thought to myself: What is a Dago? What does a Dago look like? Am I one of the enemy? I must be; Sister Anne Grace called me one.
At ten years old, I could tell the mirror anything; it never scolded me for cursing, crying into it, arguing fiercely into it, calling people not-so-nice names and best of all, it kept my secrets. It would keep this one.
It started the day I heard Momma saying to Daddy, "George, you have to go see Father Carlin and get our three girls into Holy Rosary Elementary School. They'll get a good education and it's the closest Catholic school. We're in the parish, he should take them."

I remember Daddy dressed: his five-foot-nine, Michelangelo body, his black wool suit, a white shirt which Momma had stiff-starched, and a steel gray tie. He patted a little powder, with Momma's puff, on his face so it wouldn't shine, and with his thick worker's hands tilted his black Fedora upon his shiny pate and walked confidently out of the house. He had a mission! He was so handsome. On his return, his demeanor was defeated. "Momma, Father Carlin told me to send our kids to the Italian parish school, ten more blocks for our kids to walk, but that's that." Well Momma's temper got hot and they exchanged a few angry Italian words, but Daddy did not want any more to do with it.

Momma and I paid a visit to St. Dominic's Convent, at the Italian parish, to feel out the principal of the school. After ringing the bell, we were admitted to the dining room by a five-foot short, overweight, dark skinned,and smiling nun wearing a black, wrinkled, coarse wool habit. As we sat, a garlic-smell wafted through the air, coating the insides of my nostrils, covering my eyes, sliding down my arms to my hands and finally encompassing my whole body like a noxious mist. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to wash if off. "Sicilian!" I thought. I said Momma always said, "Sicilians never learned how to use garlic subtly." Well the upshot of the visit was, Sister Amelia was willing to take us in, but Momma said, "It would be too far for my three girls to walk." Momma went to see Father Carlin.

I never knew what Momma said to Father Carlin but we all entered Holy Rosary School and you'd think the church had canonized Momma. She never missed church on any Sunday after that and she always put one whole dollar into the collection basket. I often thought, "that was the deal."

My first two years in Catholic school, third and fourth grades,

were uneventful. It was 1942, when I entered fifth grade, that I became aware of the scary sensation of bias—the feeling of being turned inside out so that the whole world could take any piece of me that it chose. It was the first year of WWII and Sister Ann Grace was my teacher. Her brother was in the army, on the front lines. All year long, at different times, she would talk about those Dagos we were fighting—I knew they lived in Italy and were the enemy. My five uncles were fighting them too.

A day in the classroom with Sister Ann Grace—a five-foot tower of aggressive energy, who held a ruler while she taught, standing tall in her fine, black, wool-serge habit, rosary beads hanging from her waist, topped off with a black, sheer silk veil, starch-stiff white wimple around her short cropped head, white starched bib sticking out in front like a shelf so that no one could get too close to her and the crucifix that hung down –was an "on-the-toes" feeling. Pristine and untouchable! Not like Sister Amelia with her happy smiling face, inviting a hug that would inundate you with a warm feeling, like home-baked applebutter, just out of the oven, that paused at your palette, right before it slides down your throat, coupled with the aroma of garlic.

The last day of fifth grade I stood at the head of the line at the side of the classroom and was awarded the prize for highest academic standing that year. Sister Ann Grace, her eyes riveted on mine, tried to reduce me to invisible and handed me an empty holy-water bottle along with these words, "I hate to give this to you. You're a Dago." I smiled and thanked her. I had just been created anew and marked with an indelible brand that could never be erased from my ten-year-old's sensitive soul. As I walked home, I dragged my feet, looked at the empty bottle through tears that rushed onto my cheeks, thoughts scrambled through my head--"She believes in holy water and hating at the same time. I'll go tell the mirror." My feet started running.

[The paper thins in the long night]

Based on a transtlation by Nguyen Ba Chung
from the Vietnamese by Nguyen Duc Mau

The paper thins in the long night.
My lamp burns with sorrowful
joy. Abruptly speech stops—
words I have to erase fill the page.

Nikki Jordan

Revelation

Based on a transtlation by Nguyen Ba Chung
from the Vietnamese by Nguyen Duc Mau

New Year's Eve—peel the calendar—watch buds
unfold. Night passes in silence—know
one strand of hair turns silver
while bud becomes flower.

Nikki Jordan

"Hue, Vietnam"
Gelatin Silver Print
Samantha Palmer

"Cat Ba Island, Vietnam"
Gelatin Silver Print
Samantha Palmer

"Music Man"
Gelatin Silver Print
Theresa Hadley

"Rush Hour"
Gelatin Silver Print
Theresa Hadley

William MacDonald

A Green Line Episode

One Saturday morning I'm heading outbound on the Green Line, when a young woman gets on at Copley and sits down near me. She's wearing a backpack--maybe a college student. Nothing remarkable about her face.

Now, I have a son who's about her age, but I never had a daughter (or a sister, for that matter). And I start to think about what it might have been like to have a daughter, maybe like this young woman. You know, would it have been different from a son – that sort of thing. No big deal.

Anyways, she opens the backpack and pulls out a book--actually, it's more like a booklet--and begins to read it. But it's the topic that catches me by surprise-- it's about pancreatic cancer. One of those information brochures you pick up in a doctor's office.

I quickly run the numbers. If she's 20, her father may be…late 40's, early 50's? Old enough. My grandfather died from pancreatic cancer. But she's really calm--like she doesn't understand it yet. Wouldn't the doctor have talked to her? Maybe she's not directly involved, maybe it's a more distant relative, or something.

She's reading the first page. Maybe the one that talks about how only 3% of the patients recover. About how they usually last only about 6 months. That's how long Pete lasted. I spent New Year's Eve in the hospital room with him. We watched the Three Stooges' Festival together. I remember Moe yelling, "Administer the anesthetic!" Whack! And we joked about his operation, the only slightly more sophisticated level of anesthesiology. I also remember that was the night that Pete said he figured the illness would wreck his career. Yeah, right, your career…Whack!

He died on Mother's Day – a particularly harsh piece of irony for my mother. I studied his face as he lay there; I figure I might have 40 - 50 years left, and I wanted to grab the image and clench it, so I wouldn't forget.

She turns the page, looking concerned now. Maybe it's the part about how's there's no effective treatment. Maybe that's why there are no pancreatic cancer walks, or runs, or telethons hosted by washed-up comedians, or giant quilts…OK, I know those are terrible diseases, but just once I'd like someone to ask me to sponsor them for a pancreatic walk, run, crawl, anything.

She turns another page, a vertical line between her eyebrows. A

year or two ago, I read that an FDA advisory committee recommended the approval of a new treatment, the first in decades. I was excited--until I read that the clinical trials had demonstrated an increased lifespan of a month or so. The committee had some concerns, but the general attitude seemed to be what the hell, nothing else works anyway.

I know that my father was thinking about his own father - how surgery didn't help, only leading to more pain during the few months he had left. And here he was, 50 years later, re-living the whole story with his own son. Wondering if he had passed a fatal gene. Wondering why he couldn't be taken instead of Pete.

She turns the pages faster and faster--no longer really reading. Flips the booklet shut, turns her head, and stares out the window. I try not to stare at her--I don't want to intrude--but I can't tell whether she's crying. Maybe there's nothing to intrude on. After all, I don't know anything about her, maybe I'm imagining all this. She's a student, maybe she's just writing a term paper, or something.

I just know that I don't care about her facial structure. I want to go over, sit down beside her, and hold her. Somehow make it different for her. The truth is, I want her to hug me back even more--because it hasn't been different for me or the people I've loved.

She got off at Northeastern. I kept going.

One August Night

On a day when you hear the sizzle of ice on August
eyelids, you go looking for your wandering mare.
You find her, weakened by heat, lowering into a slough.
Her coat glistens but her eyes looked peaked.
She is pulling cool dirt into her ditch; she is digging her own grave.
Circling above and staring down is the raven.

He hovers all day, and you fear he is only waiting to raven
her dead body. With night rises an august
moon, casting lucid beams of grave
forewarning. The shadows of a dark *mare*
entrance you as they settle over a cluster of peaked
craters. The moon pits writhe out of their illuminated slough.

Your horse attempts to roll onto her back in the slough.
Her breath is heavy, yet she chortles at the raven,
I am too big for you to eat--you hope, seeing his long peaked
beak. You sit silent and sweat in the slick August
night, waiting through the fate of your mare,
clumps of tepid mud sticking to you as you dangle over her grave.

The air feels and sounds grievous and grave.
Even the flies are sluggish as they flock to the slough,
crawling into the ears and eyes and hide of your mare.
This is the competition between the bugs and the bird to raven
her. Again the bird threatens to swoop from his august
flight and attack. You bid him to return to his peaked

perch. Above, the moon, enveloped by gauzy clouds looks peaked.
It pours yellow fog through the ether and a grave
haze over the earth. Such denseness has plagued you for all of August
and layers of humid grime have coated you like a stiff slough.
It is the suffering of heat and heart, anguish as black as the raven
that holds you prisoner to the light and shadow of the moon's *mare*.

Listless, your emotions shift, and you are no longer grieving for your mare.
You are imagining yourself walking along the peaked
cliffs of the moon. You are amidst the icy air that keeps the raven
suspended. You are far from this hot summer day, far from the grave
that keeps your horse. You are shedding the slough
of your pink skin and fading into the sober August

night. Cool quiet draws you back to the slough, and your mare
fades too. You clasp your peaked hands together and stand over her grave.
Gazing upon an augustly colored sky you watch the raven dive.

*mare: any of several dark areas on the surface of the moon.

Jeanine Boulay

Jeanne Kent

[Dear Abby]

Dear Abby,

I am eighteen years old. I am pregnant. I am a Catholic. I live in a one-bedroom studio, got to college full-time and work at a Mental Health Center as a receptionist, full-time. I don't believe in abortion. It's wrong. How would I live with myself? I don't want to put my baby up for adoption but how can I keep it? Who can I turn to Where do I go?

The father? I lived with him for a month. I stopped going to confession. I left him mainlining heroin.

I met him when I lived in the Deca Arms Hotel, over a drug-store. I couldn't afford the dorms. Even though I'm on scholarship I have to work for rent, food, books and clothes. Oh! I already told you I worked. I got pneumonia, maybe, from walking early mornings: miles to classes, miles to work, miles back to the room on the third floor, the room with the fire station across the street. The lights! The sirens!

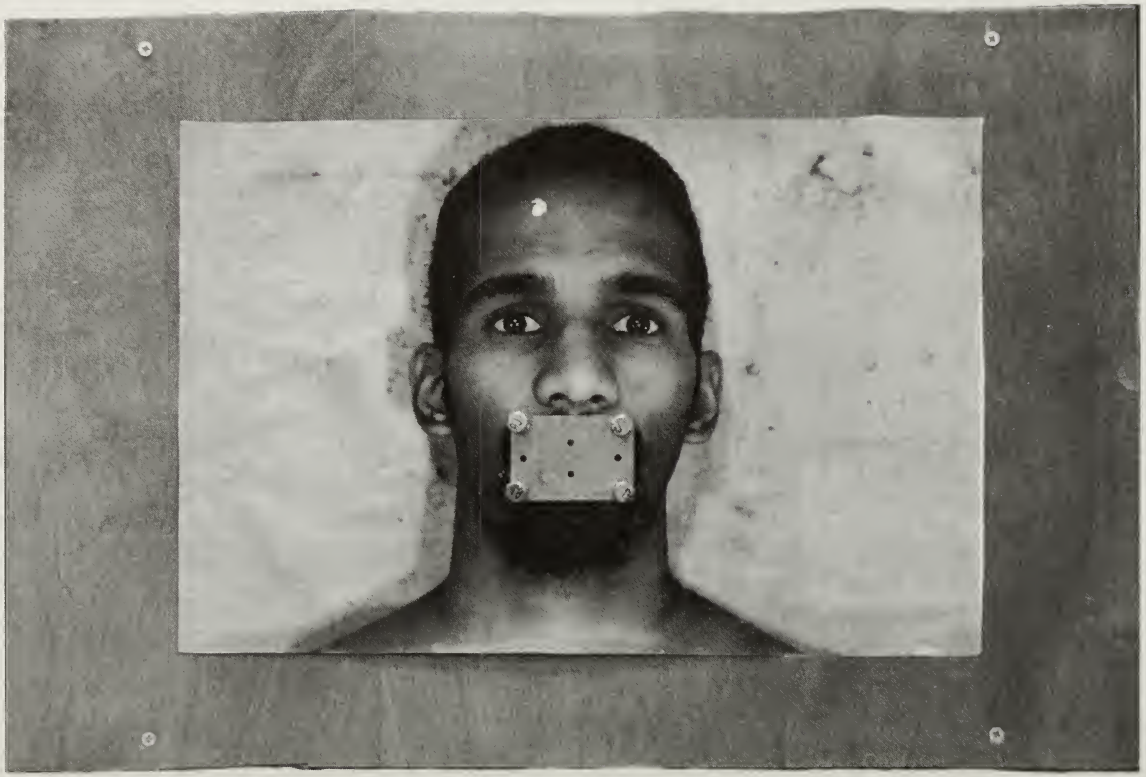
One day he knocked on my door, wondered where I've been. I didn't know he missed staring at me as I walked up the stairwell, although I remembered him leaning against the wall, looking at me, making me feel naked. He wasn't handsome but had a nice smile and a good body. I told him I was sick. He brought me soup the prostitutes down the hall cooked for me. Together they made me tea, fed me. One night he walked me up the street to the Catholic hospital emergency room. They wouldn't keep me. No money. Told me to go home to mother.

We went back to my room. The heat was out, so we slept together. Windy promised me he wouldn't do drugs as long as he was with me. He even got a job in a glue factory.

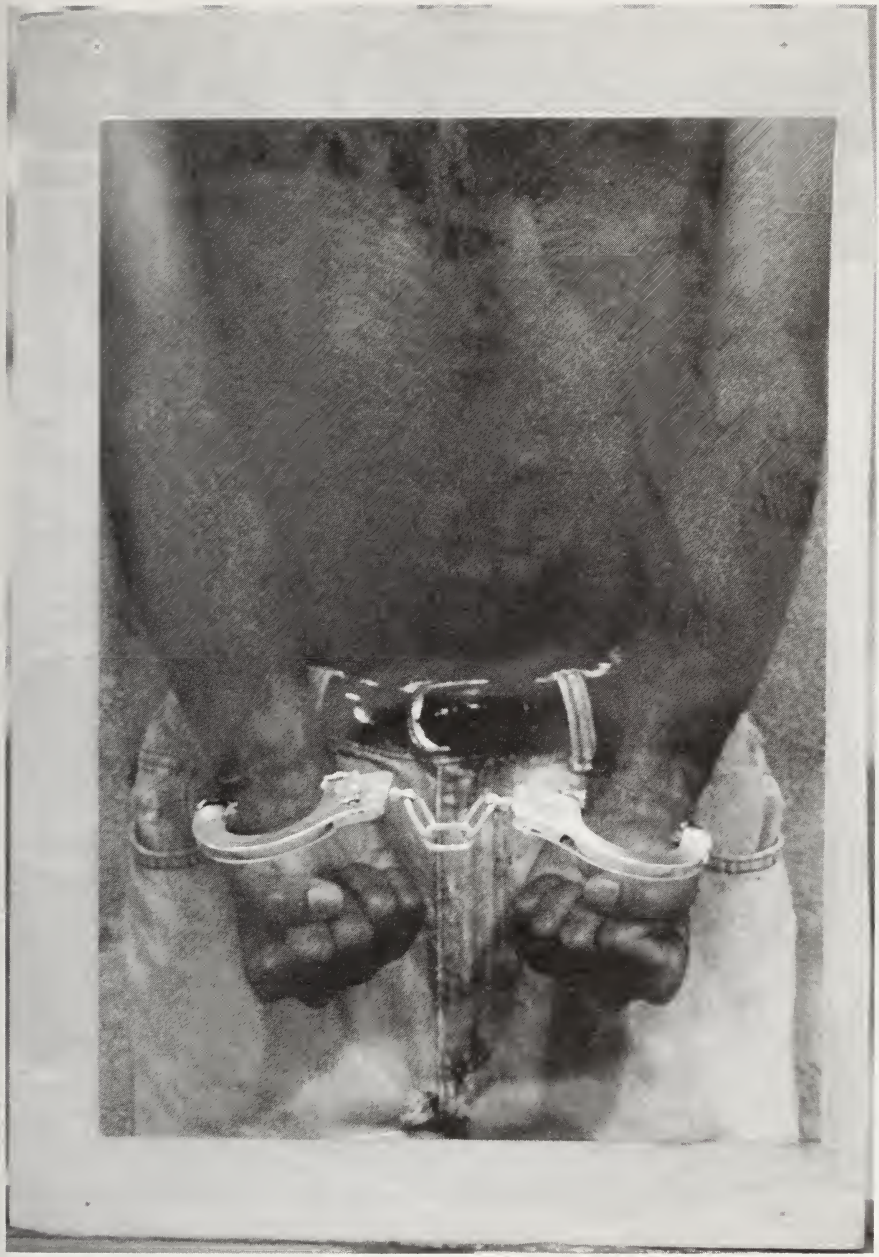
Then his friends razzed the life out of him and he weakened. But I promised myself I'd never live with another addict. Right now as I'm writing this letter, my brother is probably ingesting something, screaming about God, the end of the world and how the devil comes to him all night. I had to leave. Mother wouldn't stop him from coming into my room to steal my money. I left home just like I left Windy. I thought I was going to be free, going to be okay after I got my period. But then Windy followed me after work, broke into my apartment, and forced himself on me. I didn't scream. I didn't do anything. He didn't beat me up, so it wasn't rape. All I did was get up the next morning and take a test on a Theodore Dreiser book. The landlord put a good lock on my

door. (Excuse me, the phone.) My brother got put in Danvers State Mental Hospital. He tried to stab a priest and burned the flag on the rectory lawn, protesting the war. I'd go back home but my oldest brother will be home from Vietnam soon and he used to beat me and stare at my breasts. Where do I go, Abby? I want a better life for my baby. How about an unwed mothers' home where I can live in peace until my time, where I can decide?

Lonely in Lowell



"Things..."
Mixed Media (Photograph, Metal, & Wood)
Suthir Shanmugasundaram



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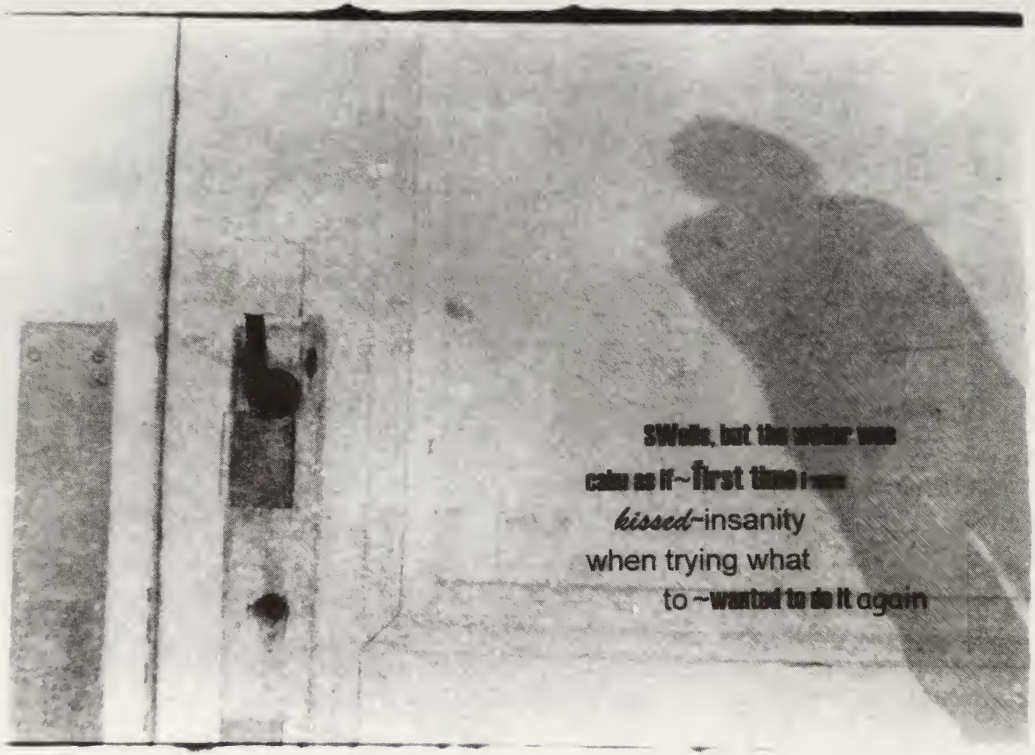


"Untitled"
Sandwiched Negative with Transparency Overlay
Anne Raisner

THE STONES OF GALILEE

for Brian Scott Kelly

I had my stone, and I was ready then,
And proud to carry out the ancient law.
I was the one who found her there—I saw
Her share her bed and itching thighs, and when
We pulled her out and brought her to the square
I crouched and gathered rocks enough to kill,
To keep the laws as they've always been. I will—
I must admit we would have stoned her there.

The stranger sitting all alone was asked
If we should stone the whore or not. He said
"Yes, let the one who hasn't sinned throw first."
And then the others left, some nearly fled
From shame.
I dropped the stone I would have cast
And walked away—although I was the last.

Thomas Olivieri

APOSTROPHY TO A STREET-LAMP

Because I think I love you Mister Light,
and because you're always good to me, and let
me swing around your pole, and when I'm wet
you don't make fun of me, and you're bright all night;
because, I think, you're good to me I might,
just might, decide to sing to you—I bet
you'd like that—but then you haven't heard me yet,
I'll sing to you old friend while you've light in sight.

O Mister Light—the day is coming now—
O I confess I drank a little much,
but please don't pull the day on me. O how
could you have done this Mister Light, you're such
a jerk—I'm sorry, please O please don't pout.
O Mister Light, please don't put me out!

Thomas Olivieri

Sonnet

Sweet Jacqui, granted excess beauty, spread
Her surplus lustre through her gentle frame,
So that the vibrant hairs upon her head
Are matched by perfect feet, observers claim.
What luck! What joy envelops me when she,
With coyest hand removes her shoe, and lo!
The tiny foot presented just for me!
My heart undone by Jacqui's smallest toe.
With eager hand, I hope and wish and pray
I might, with choicest of enamels, paint
Her toes for the duration of the day
And render her cute feet all the more quaint.
The red nail polish waits; my breath is still.
With smile and anxious foot, she grants my will.

Paul J. Dyson

Alpheus and Arethusa

Sweet nymph! he mingled his waters with yours,
Loquacious, frictive, like sand over sand.
Through Sea Ionian, to Sicily,
The hunter stalked you, nymph of Syracuse.
The river caught you in watery arms;
He filled your fount, caressed your shallow pools.
And then, when you were one, he asked again,
And you said "Yes," and, blushing, wed the god.

Throughout the worldly seas the lovers ran,
Into the "stately pleasure dome" of Kahn;
They frolicked in the "caverns measureless";
Unbridled waves lapped hard against the sides.
Then out to greater oceans did they wend,
The bearded river-god and naiad fair;
They touched each edge of Earth with arms outstretched,
Then, up through clouds, they rained on every lake.

I waited for years by the shore for you,
'Til you came licking at sand and smooth rocks.
I carefully knelt and scooped you both out:
A hand, an eye, a breast, blue lips that sing.
Back to my house, in a one-gallon jug,
I carried my guests, the god and the nymph,
To love and to touch, to fill me, to be
Ice for my drink, hot water for my bath.

Paul J. Dyson

Paul A. Ridge

My Lizard Came in the Mail via FedEx

My lizard came in the mail via FedEx. I had seen an ad in *Sports Illustrated* or something like that for Gecko lizards and the ad described them as being the best pet in the world: small, quiet, easy to clean, fun to watch and cheap to feed. Being lonely, by myself most of the day (I worked the night shift at Copy Cop while my roommate worked the day shift at some office) and having no social life of which to speak, I decided that I needed a little friend to keep me company. Well, I did have some contact with the few people that actually came to Copy Cop in the middle of the night, but they were usually the sort of people that I tried to avoid on the street by crossing to the other side when I saw them coming.

Anyway, I saw the ad for the Geckos in the back of a magazine and I clipped it out immediately (we have no shortage of scissors at Copy Cop) and put it in my pocket. When I got home at 6 a.m., I wrote out a check for twenty dollars and wrote "For Gecko" in the memo space. Then, I placed it in an envelope that I addressed to the Gecko farm, which was somewhere in Ohio, slapped a stamp on it and dropped it in the mailbox outside our front door. According to the ad, I could expect to receive my Gecko within three to five business days. I figured that I would get it by Friday or maybe Saturday morning.

In the ensuing days, I purchased a small, rectangular aquarium, a sack of FleaFree sandbox sand, a plastic plant, a little heat lamp and a plastic water bowl. As the week slipped by, I got so excited about my little Gecko that was coming via FedEx that I could hardly sleep when I got home from work in the morning. I was kept awake by thoughts of bringing my little lizard buddy in his little tank to work with me at night and watching him thrive as geeky, greasy little men with thick glasses made copies of incomprehensible math equations and what-not. My little buddy, whom I planned on naming Robbie, and I would be a bastion of sanity amid the swirling chaos of Copy Cop at 2 a.m.

Around 10 on Friday morning, I was snapped out of an uneasy sleep by the doorbell. I peeked out of my bedroom window and saw the FedEx man on my doorstep with one of those two-wheelers on which was a box so large that it could have contained a refrigerator. I guess I just assumed that the huge box was for someone else in our apartment complex and that the FedEx man must have had little Robbie in a little brown box in his pocket or some other snug place. Donning my bathrobe, I skipped to the front door and swung it open. "Hi!" I greeted the FedEx man. I was quivering with excitement and the guy was looking at me a little funny.

"'You Nero DiNapoli?" he asked, obviously not as excited about this

delivery as I was.

"That's me! Got a package for me?" I answered, trying to sound nonchalant. The guy just gave me a look that said "Why the hell else would I be here?" I didn't let that get me down, though.

"Sign here, please" he said and handed me a clipboard and a pen and I signed as fast as I could, all the while trying to see where he had my package.

I signed the slip and the FedEx man pushed by me with his two-wheeler and set the huge box on the living room floor. He gave me a quick look as if I was a nut and started to hurry out of my apartment with his two-wheeler trailing behind him.

"Wait a minute!" I called after him. By this time I was genuinely confused. Had I misread the advertisement in SI? Did I not realize that the aquarium, sand, lamp, and plastic bowl were included in the price? Why such a big box?

"Something wrong?" the FedEx man asked me.

"Yeah, man." I answered, "Like, why is the box so BIG?"

"Well," he asked "what did you order, a refrigerator?"

"No way, man. I ordered a Gecko lizard. It should come in a little box."

"Is your name Nero DiNapoli?"

"Yup."

"Then this is your package."

With that rather rude parting shot, the FedEx man left and slammed the front door shut behind him. Well, there I was standing in my living room staring at the box, which was a little taller than me. Eventually, I recovered from the initial shock of receiving such a ridiculously huge box for such a bitty little lizard and I went to the kitchen to get a knife with which to slice open the box.

When I came back from the kitchen, I found the box torn asunder and lying in pieces all over the floor. I realized that little Robbie must have gotten out somehow when the box exploded and I went looking under all the furniture in the apartment to see where he was hiding but I couldn't find him. He must have made his skin blend in with the carpet or a chair leg or something (I think they can blend in with their surroundings...). So I started calling his name, which I'm not sure he knew yet, and shaking the little container of crickets, which is what Geckos eat, to get him to come out. "Hey, come out little fella! Come on out little Robbie!"

I was starting getting really bummed out figuring that I had already lost my little buddy but just before I reached a state of total despair, I happened to glance up and see little Robbie suctioned to the ceiling by his toes. He was bigger than I thought he'd be: at least nine feet long from his nose to the tip of his tail (though I figured he was probably five feet long not counting the tail) and his coloration was a little different from the Gecko depicted in the ad. In the picture, the Gecko was sort of yellowish with black stripes and green, cat-like eyes. Robbie (I decided that the prefix "little" was completely inappropriate for him) was deep blue with wide gray stripes and enormous yellow, dog-like eyes. I figured that he probably weighed a little more than me, maybe about one-hundred sixty pounds. He was also built like a professional weight lifter and I realized that he had probably could have disintegrated the box he came in just by flexing his muscles.

No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't get Robbie off the living room ceiling. I tried tempting him with the crickets but he couldn't have cared any less about them. I also tried knocking him off gently with a broom handle but I didn't have the heart to nudge him too hard so he just stayed up there. I couldn't even tell if he was looking at me because his huge eyes just stared ahead and didn't even blink once.

I spent the entire day trying to get Robbie off the ceiling but I had no luck at all. I was a little afraid that Mike, my roommate, would be mad to find a large lizard securely adhered to the living room ceiling but when he got home, he didn't really care. When he came through the front door, he just looked up at the ceiling and distractedly asked "What's that?"

I answered "That's Robbie, my new lizard. I can't get him off the ceiling. I hope you're not mad." He shook his head "no" and went into the kitchen to get a beer. I had to go to work soon but I wanted to try one more thing to get Robbie down before I left for Copy Cop so I ran down the street to the convenience store.

At the convenience store, I bought the biggest spatula I could find, figuring that I might be able to slide it under his suction toes and make him fall to the carpet. I had no idea where I would put him yet, the little aquarium probably being too small and the box he came in being too shredded to be of any use. The problem was solved for me by the time I got home. When I got through the door, I was struck speechless to see that Mike had already gotten Robbie down. There they were, Mike and Robbie, sitting on the couch, watching TV, and drinking beer.

"Mike?...Robbie?" I managed to sputter after a minute or so.

"Yeah, man," said Mike without taking his eyes off the tube, "Rob was just thirsty. I got him a brew and he came down."

Robbie wouldn't pay attention to me at all. For the rest of the night, he and Mike just watched TV, drank beer, and munched on popcorn. Inspite of myself, I was a little jealous that Robbie seemed to like Mike more than he liked me, but I didn't want it to seem that obvious. So, just to show that I could handle it if Robbie didn't hang out with me all the time, I called Copy Cop and told them I'd be a little late and I cooked a big spaghetti dinner as a sort of peace offering. When I went to call them into the kitchen for dinner, though, they were on their way out the door.

"Hey, where are you going?" I asked, sounding more pathetic and lonely than I had meant to.

Mike answered me, "Oh. We're going to the bar. You wanna come?" I shook my head, my feelings crushed. Mike and Robbie (who, much to my surprise, was a biped) walked out together, joking around like old friends, and let the door slam behind them. I ate my spaghetti by myself and went to work.

When I got home the next morning I realized things just weren't going to work out between Mike, Robbie, and me. Usually, when I got home from work, I would just peel down to my shorts and fall asleep in my room on my bed. The day after I got Robbie, though, I came home to find Robbie asleep in my bed (it turns out, he actually could close his eyes) with some girl, whom he probably met at the bar, clinging to him and sleeping contentedly. I shook my head in disgust, grabbed

a blanket, and crashed on the couch in the living room.

Things continued like this for the next couple of weeks. Mike and Robbie got along famously, which sucked, because I was the one after all who had ordered Robbie from that magazine ad. Robbie's presence in the apartment made things unbearable too, because whenever I wanted to take a shower, either Mike or Robbie or one of their girlfriends would be in there. They would use up all the hot water and take so goddamned long in there that I was late to work a bunch of times on account of them. When the phone bill came, it was huge because of all these long distance calls to Dos Pilas (Mexico), Galveston (Texas), and Cincinnati (Ohio); all tropical places from which Geckos are known to hail. I approached Mike about the phone charges (assuming that since I had never heard Robbie speak that he was mute and therefore couldn't have made the phone calls) but he informed me that Robbie had, indeed, made the calls. Furthermore, he informed me that I, as Robbie's owner, was responsible for paying for those calls. Frustrated, but not being able to escape this seemingly flawless logic, I decided to call a "roommate meeting". We worked out a convenient time for everybody; 6 p.m. the next day before I had to go to work.

By the time six o'clock rolled around the next night, neither Mike nor Robbie was home. I just sat on the couch, fuming, and at 6:15, Mike, Robbie, and their girlfriends finally came in. They were laughing and having a great time and I'm pretty sure I heard one of the girls remark "Oh, Rob, you say the funniest things!" When they saw me sitting by myself on the couch, they stopped laughing suddenly, and then, after looking around at each other for a moment, smiling, they broke out laughing again, as if at some joke about me to which I was not privy. Dutifully, though, Mike and his girlfriend sat down next to me on the couch and Robbie sat on the Lay-Z-Boy with his girlfriend, an incredibly attractive blonde girl, sitting on his scaly blue lap. They all just looked at me and waited for me to speak. Robbie just stared straight in my general direction with his big yellow eyes and enormous inky pupils.

"Hey, man," asked Mike after a long moment's silence during which I was too livid to speak, "this isn't going to take long, is it? We have reservations..."

"No." I answered, trying to keep my cool. "Listen," I said "it obviously isn't working out here with the three of us. The way I see it, either I've gotta send Robbie back to Ohio or your girlfriends have got to stop living here. It just isn't right. They're not paying rent and they're" I pointed at Robbie and the girls, "taking over the place. It's just not right. I can't even take a freakin' shower or sleep in my own bed!" Mike started to say something but I wasn't done yet. "Listen, it's cool if Robbie stays. He's my pet, he's my responsibility, and we'll work out the housing problem between ourselves later. But you guys can't take over my room and make me late for work all the time!"

I had practically been shouting by the time I finished and everyone was looking at me like I was some kind of jerk. Really, I guess I was just jealous that Robbie liked everyone else better than me and that he had a really great social life while my social life was nothing short of crappy. But what the hell, he was my pet and I felt that I had the right to call more of the shots around the apartment, at least

as far as whom it was that slept in my bed.

"Ok..." started Mike, looking around at everyone else for support, "Listen, Nero, we've all been thinking about this and, yeah, you're right, it's not going to work out with all of us living here. So...ahmm...we talked to the landlord and he said he'd give you somewhere else to live at one of his other properties if you let us four take over the lease." I just sat there, wide-eyed and dumbfounded.

"Yeah," said his girlfriend, backing him up, "the landlord figured that he'd make more money by having four of us paying rent here so, ya know...things are just miserable here with you around, anyway."

"Yeah, Ok, fine!" I retorted, "But what's he going to do?" I yelled, thrusting a finger out toward Robbie, "He doesn't have a job! How's he going to make the rent each month?"

Robbie's girlfriend rolled her eyes at me. "Duh!" she answered "He just got a job at Copy Cop working the day shift!"

That was a couple of months ago and I've since moved into my new apartment. I still see Robbie every now and then as the shifts change over at Copy Cop but I never talk to him. Actually, I'm not even sure, on account of his big staring eyes, if he even notices me. It aggravates me, though that he seems to get "Employee of the Month" every single month and one of the dayshifters even mentioned to me that Robbie's being considered for a management position. The landlord was able to get me a single apartment which costs less than when I lived with Mike, but now instead of very occasional contact with other human beings, I have none whatsoever. I'm considering getting a fish but I hear that they can get bossy. Maybe I'll get a plant.

Proposed 30

I have no reason to suspect that hat-boxes full of ex-lovers
won't show themselves with a revived intrigue on my thirtieth birthday.
Surely,
I will lift each into the latest of night
dust off the bluest eyes with the kindest ones
and regret
little.
I will spend the best part of that morning
thumbing through volumes of two-penny romances
written of my own hand,
burning ivory cigarettes in effigy
of the brides I have not been.

No white pickett husband
will greet me that afternoon
as I latch the gate.

No buzzing children
will interrupt my bathroom mirror
with attempts to emulate.

I will leave the evening living-room
soundless
I will toast at dawn my wisdom
with indiscreete gentleman
and sleep with all of them.

There is little left that leads me to believe
that any figment you suggest
could harden to longer than this.

Dina Varsalone

"Untitled"
Linoleum Print
Nicole Lyons

"Untitled"
Linoleum Print
Kim Marquardt

"Radiation"
Etching
Debbie Duncan

"Girl"
Etching
Debbie Duncan

"Mark Sandman"
Image Transfer / Etching
Cynthia Abott

"Summer"
Etching
Nora Tengtrakool

Stephen Smith

Saturday Afternoon

It was a peaceful Saturday afternoon in September.. The Common in Boston is alive with over-excited families taking pictures every three steps, to capture images of the foliage. The sun scintillates in the sky, unrestricted by clouds. Children are gathering leaves in hopes of finding the perfect one for pressing between two sheets of wax paper, for a remnant of their youth that will forever be preserved. All the while parents gawk, remembering their days in the park. A perfect day.

Meanwhile, on a bench at the edge of the park, under a tree that is prematurely exhausted of its leaves, sits a man. A frumpy man about sixty. He eats popcorn patiently, sparingly tossing some to a pesky bird, so it will leave him alone. He sits and waits.

A man, around the age of twenty-five, aimlessly barrels through the park. Happy and clumsy, he swings a little to the music from his headset, playfully joshing the children. As he continues onward, he nearly passes his father sitting on the bench, then doubles back.

"Hey, Dad."

"Hello, Son. How are you?"

"Cool, Dad. And you?"

"Not bad for an old man."

"Cool, cool… Alright," he pauses, "yeah."

There is an uneasiness. The father's face is stern. The son, however strains to smile and his head bobs, his hands clasp, as he thinks of something to say.

"So, Dad, hu, how's the job?"

"Oh, shut up." The father snaps, his face crumpled with anger.

"Not well, huh?"

"It's not that."

"Well. What is it?"

"It's, well, it's you son."

"Me?" The son replies, rather shocked by the revelation.

"Yes, son. You…it's…well, I hate you."

"You what?"

"I hate you. Out of all the kids, you were the one I hated most."

"You hate us all?"

"No, not all of you. Your younger brother is rather funny and keeps me on my toes. Your sister's beautiful and she's the only daughter. And your older brother makes all the money, so I have to love him for financial reasons."

"Well, how come you don't love me?"

Immediately responding, almost interrupting, "First of all, you look like your mother, and I *hate* her. And you always have this stupid look on your face. It's like… like… like that one right there," the father exclaims, waving his finger in his son's face, "That one right there, don't move."

"What? What?" The son wails, confused.

"Damn it. See, and you never listen. Did you know that when you were born, I wanted to flush you down the toilet? But nooooooo, your mother wouldn't let me. She stopped me, but when she wasn't around I would bathe you in the toilet and just stare, sickened. I'd just stare, with my hand on the handle, just cursing your name. At times you showed promise, but you always had the aura of a loser."

"But, I'm doing stuff, now, you know like, like…"

"Oh, don't talk! It hurts, oh, I'm gonna be sick."

"Knock it off!"

"Oh, where's my baggie."

"That's it, I'm leaving!"

"Don't do me anymore favors, okay."

The son storms off, bumping into people, shocked and angered. The father smiles with amusement.

"Ah, that felt good," he turns and speaks to the pigeon that sits on the far end of the bench waiting to be fed. "I can't wait until my daughter gets here."

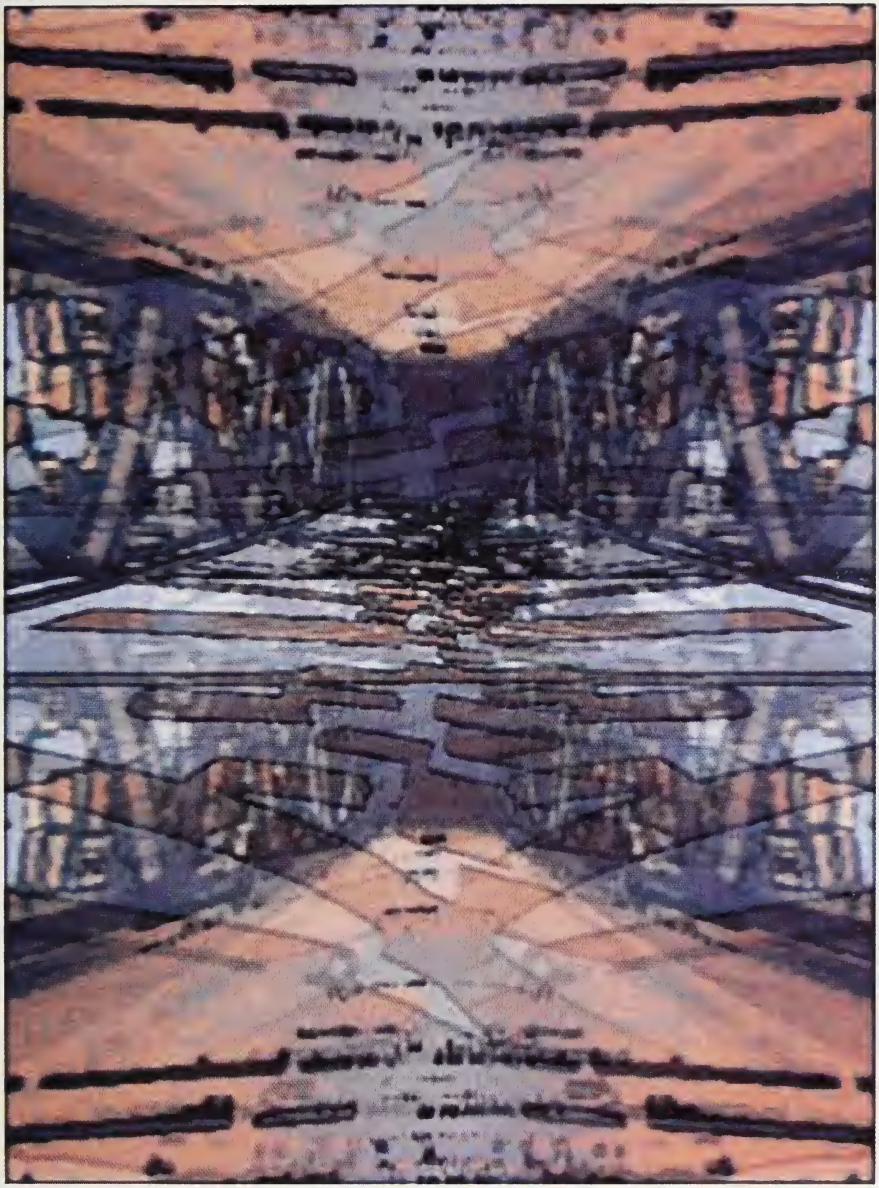
The bird looks at him quizzically, then flies away.

invocation to Kali

dark mother
who walks in crematoriums
destructrix
who dances with the dead
hear my prayer

black darling
whose touch annihilates
feed me with your breath
heal me with your scent
your daughter, your devotee

Kate O'Brien



"Untitled"
Digital Image
Joe Cullen

"Some Weird Sin"
Digital Image
Joe Cullen

"Mass Production"
Digital Image
Joe Cullen

"Dance with Me"
Digital Image
Suthi L. Picotte-Harper

"Deception"
Digital Image
Suthi L. Picotte-Harper

"Angelic Crash & Burn"
Digital Image
David Earle

"Point of View"
Digital Image
David Earle

"postmodern artist"
3D
Elizabeth A. Roper

"carriage, my dear"
3D
Elizabeth A. Roper

"Vinalhaven Lace"
Color Slide
Theresa Hadley

"Watermark"
Color Slide
Theresa Hadley

"Old Towne Center, Santa Fe, NM"
Color Slide
Suthir Shanmugasundaram

"Untitled, Old Mesilla, NM"
Color Slide
Suthir Shanmugasundaram

"Elm Banks #50"
Color Slide
Suthir Shanmugasundaram

"Sandia Peaks, Albuquerque, NM"
Color Slide
Suthir Shanmugasundaram

"Slowly Sinking"
Sepia Toned Print
Dan Lavoie

Adam Rossi

Three Exercises – A letter to my brother

I am writing this to you, as some sort of aid, to try and help you understand how it is that when we act, we sometimes harm ourselves and others thereby…Basically, there are three exercises one performs in the aftermath of such action…

This is the first Exercise.

…and of course it does mean something that I have HIV…it is significant. For one thing, how did it come about?

It was not an accident. Obviously, I am responsible for the consequences of my actions, (as was the man who infected me).. So why did I do it? Why did I act in such a way that would likely harm me? Surely the answer has to have significance for others as well as me?

Is it the case that we can't be expected to always act in our own interest? Sometimes we screw up. But here are different kinds of screw-ups. There are all kinds of accidental ones, that distinction, *all one's planning to the contrary.* At least you tried. Then there is simple human error. My mistake is not of this sort.

I know the difference between right and wrong. I had the chance to prove myself, to show that I really did know the difference. Knowing what the possible consequences were I acted, not in deviance but in a pale, weak acquiescence. I succumbed, and submitted to his intrusion.

Was it deliberate? Was it an act of love or of malice? I still don't know. He claims his innocence, maybe he was, maybe we both were. But we are still left with the consequences.

For Socrates, one can never knowingly harm oneself or another. To do so is to act against one's own interest. Knowledge, that is self-knowledge, is virtue; if one comes to know oneself, one has become virtuous. Therefore, one can never knowingly do harm to oneself or others.

Aristotle remained unconvinced. For him there were just too many counter-examples walking around to refute of undermine Socrates' assertion. Aristotle uses the example of Medea, who murdered her own children. An act she contemplated before doing it, one which she knew would have ruinous consequences—and yet one she still went through with.

We ought to try and understand ourselves. It seems to me that we act on the basis of intuitions, which prompt us to do things which are not necessarily in our best interest. We may mediate these promptings

against a host of considerations—other intuitions we might have, the possible consequences for others, conventional mores and so on...

Our failure may be a failure of will, or a willful act. I think both, if that doesn't invite contradiction. We may persuade ourselves, as others can persuade us, to act against our own interests. A pale acquiesce. This is why we are led to eat the wrong foods, why we smoke when we ought not to, drink too much, take drugs, and so on.

Having acted, we have to throw ourselves on to the horn of the world and await what happens.

This leads to the second exercise. "Does HIV make you holy?" or "what to do on the receipt of hate mail letters from your relatives."

Hate mail from one's relatives is always vexing, but never more so when one has HIV.

But first let's consider, "Does HIV make you holy?" This assertion was made by a relative of mine, by marriage, one Ms. Patricia Bennett. I therefore address my careful considerations to her and to all the Ms. Patricia Bennett's of the world.

According to Ms. Patricia Bennett: In order for a person with HIV to be a beneficiary of forgiveness or sympathy, the giver must be in denial. People with HIV consider themselves, and are considered (though not by the Patricia Bennetts of the world) to be holy and for that reason deserving of the world's pity. (This is a non-sequiter, but never mind).

Are people in denial when they show sympathy to others with HIV? I can only wonder, in denial of what? Presumably, of their natural feelings. Maybe what they ought to be feeling is repulsion, hate, and such.

What right do I or others like me have to the love of my family? (Incidentally the love of my family was forthcoming and overwhelming-to the disappointment and chagrin of Ms. Patricia Bennett, who is a member only by marriage.)

Part of the problem of my trying to answer that question, ironically, is due to the opposite of my lone relative's assertion, and that is: people with HIV do not feel holy, in fact they feel whatever the opposite of holy is. They feel degraded by their condition, especially if they feel it is one they have brought upon themselves. In this state no one feels deserving of another's sympathy. In fact, to be the recipient of it is only to increase one's feeling of degradation and shame.

Does the world think people with HIV are holy? I haven't polled Mars or the outer planets, but I think I know what the answer is.

Of course what did Ms. Patricia Bennett mean by holy? Who knows; but something like the following is probably close. Views like hers have to be defended. If you choose to deny another human being sympathy, you have to be in "denial" of your nature to do so. Therefore, it helps to hate those that threaten to impinge upon you with their need.

If you are a racist or a homophobe, you have to defend your views against the world and it's always the same defense, "it's them, not us." It's their degradation that leads me to hate them, they deserve it. "People with HIV consider themselves holy, when we really know they are not, (ironically true) why should I waste my sympathy on them?" and so on.

Well, before this grows too tiresome, it's easy to mock the Ms. Patricia Bennetts (as she now prefers me to call her) of the world. But views, nasty and brutish as they are, have to be engaged from time to time, especially if you are newly emerged from shame and self-loathing, blinded by the glare of the familial love; wondering, do I deserve this?

Most of us find it easy to express sympathy for others. The only condition the recipient has to meet is that, for whatever reason, they be in need. The recipient doesn't even need to be human; animals get our sympathy.

If some people deserve sympathy and others not, what choice are we making? Afterall, Hitler was a very sympathetic man. He loved Eva, his dog, his architect (for a time). But for Hitler, not everyone deserved the same degree of sympathy.

We face choices, we act like human beings or we can ally ourselves with the Ms. Patricia Bennetts of the world. The grotesque thing, is that those most deserving of sympathy, of help and love are sometimes those most loathe to seek it or accept it if offered. And it's for this reason that the Ms. Patricia Bennetts of the world must be resisted.

So, what do we do with hate mail from our relatives? One ought to be as inventive with it as possible, but personally I favor recycling, it's better for the environment.

Now the third exercise. Learning to live in the world.

T.E. Lawrence felt that the "citadel of his integrity" had been destroyed after he was raped; not because he was raped, but because he enjoyed it. Donne was his mirror image, and was tormented by the thought, why did God not rape him?

Why should we have to choose—wouldn't it be better if the right way were forced upon us? A form of instinct...?

...Living in the world, we can ask, what has the world to do with us? How much as I a part of society? Just as we sometimes condemn ourselves as selfish, cruel, slovenly, acquisitive, considered as a whole, these terms fit easily for our society.

What has this society to do with the people in it? Nothing, I think. That we can say we are selfish or cruel is a reflection of society's influence on us. It is not the case that society's selfishness and cruelty is the gross accumulation of our individual vices.

The society we are a part of contains values we naturally abhor, its influence upon us is always pernicious and should be resisted.

Once we reject society and its values, we are thrown back on our

own resources. We have to choose, but alone…on the whole I think we do pretty well, on our own. As such, we can't be expected to always act sensibly.

As I said, it's easy to be cynical. In this country we sanely debate whether fucking another guy without a condom is an act of love and therefore permissible. How many millions are dead of AIDS? Magazines devoted to HIV and to the infected feature David Cassidy on the front cover.

It's easy to see how the Ms. Patricia Bennetts of the world can thrive when we are supposed to reverence the wisdoms of the likes of David Cassidy, Diana Ross and Barbara Streisand. It beggars the meaning of the word cynicism.

HIV and AIDS are reduced to a comedy…

…We do remarkably well despite society's best efforts, but it has to be understood, that we always do so in spite of society.

So it follows that we make mistakes, the familiar metaphor being fuck up!…we have only an intuition of an ideas to how to act…the prerequisites for understanding ourselves would be provided in community with others, living as a human being among human beings, something society denies us.

The influence of society is always precocious, and is mitigated only by individuals, alone or sometimes in community with others.

When learning how to act, it seems to me to be important as a beginning, to think critically, of society and of oneself. Of course, it's only a beginning, and as I now realize, a very meager one.

Jada Williams

Colored

As I trace a circle of dust around the plastic covering on my old lampshade with my fingertip, I hear my mother's footsteps descending the wooden stairs my dad built.

"Are you wearing socks down here on this cement?" she asks, as I continue to examine the shade. She always insists on covering things, "to make them last longer." I wiggle my toes inside new white socks.

I stand up beside her and we both stand with our hands on our hips over the large pile of cartons, boxes and bags. I look down at her feet. She is wearing sneakers.

"I don't know how a nineteen-year-old could have collected all of these things. Where did you get it all?" I know, secretly she is thrilled to finally, with permission, paw through my childhood. I turn left toward the trunk where I know my old diaries are hidden. Silently directing her, I point right toward the older relics, not sure myself what the boxes contain. She begins with the box neatly labeled years ago, "Fisher Price."

"You have to save these for your kids." I hear her say behind me, as I unlock the long trunk before me. Between two thick novels I see my leather diary from junior high. I take a deep breath and slide my fingers between the thin pages, marveling at the sweetness of my old handwriting. Three words flash up at me.

"I'm not gay." I stop breathing. I can't remember writing this. Fifth grade? Christ. I can barely remember the crush. She had been a teacher, the kind who wear long, flowered dresses and perfume and knit button-up sweaters. I exhale and glance back at my mother. She has been labeling the boxes, "Animals" and "People."

"Mum, I don't really have room for those."

"You can keep them here, then" she says like a Disney character, without pausing at her task. I glance down and see my old school book. I pick it up. It is full of gold stars, certificates, blue ribbons, and awards. My mother had saved each proud memory as she had edited my little biography in her beautiful handwriting.

"Want more coffee, Mum?" I ask her, eager to stretch my legs and breath.

"Thank you. Milk, but only a little, OK?" I already know this. I pick up her mug. Something about friendship being life's garden is scrawled across it in pink. I pad upstairs. I can hear her sneeze and remember her dust allergies.

As I walk through the front hallway I notice my first grade photo on the stand by the door. The smile and dimples of the little pig-tailed girl are flawless. A numbness begins to impregnate my body as I consider telling her, consider finally blemishing this image, consider opening her eyes to the confusion I had lived with during my childhood. I put the picture away and slam my finger in the top drawer. I stand and watch the blood under my skin slowly change colors. Purple traces the outline of my nail, as I remember doing on purpose with a marker when I was young.

"Markers are for paper, stop drawing on yourself, now let me wash your hands," she had then said. She washed my hands under warm water with soap, leaning over me, running my hands through her own. We had the same hands. She scrubbed until no color could be seen.

Now I stare down at the dusty, chewed fingertips as I walk into the kitchen. I pour our coffee and look for the milk. I pour the same amount of milk into her mug as I do my own, adding two teaspoons of sugar to mine. I remember an argument we had had when I was little. I had hated soggy cereal, so I had asked her if I could eat my cereal and drink a glass of milk with it. When she had given my logic no answer other than "No," I'd pressed further and demanded to know why. "Because that's not the way you eat cereal." Today, dry cereal seems to be the best choice. I can excavate and eat at the same time.

Hands full, I stop myself before descending the stairs. Should I replace the photo? I put down the coffee and pull it out of the drawer. I stare into her eyes. I don't seem as happy. I put her back into the drawer. I am ready.

I go down the stairs one step at a time. I can see two separate piles appearing now from her efforts. To my right, my possessions since birth, and to my left, what I will need to survive on my own. The left pile is much smaller. I look at her. She looks tired. I hand her the mug. She stops and stands up without looking toward me. We both pause and look at the two piles.

"Mum, there's something I want to talk to you about."

"Oh no." She jokes, although she knows I am serious.

"You and Dad have always told me that I can come to you about anything."

"Of course you can. We don't want you to ever keep anything from us," she says. I am not sure if she means this. I am not sure if she can handle my news. I consider making something up instead of continuing. Will she cry? Will she scream? Will she fall?

"Well, there's something I've never told you that I've always hidden," I say looking into her eyes. They stare back blankly, as if she's calculating the A's in school, remembering honors banquets, trying to imagine what I could have hidden.

"Mom, I'm gay."

I watch her every motion. I lose her eyes. She sits down on the bottom step. She cradles her coffee. Her shoulders arch down toward the cement floor. I find myself rambling on, unaware of my words.

"I've always known this, and I've finally acknowledged it to myself and I'm in a relationship for the first time in my life, and I'm really happy, but the only thing that could make me happier is for you and Dad to be included in my life now and I'm tired of hiding things from you and I want to be close to you both, but I can't do this with so many secrets." I am finished. "Does this make any sense?" I don't dare continue. She stands again and walks toward the boxes.

"Have you got any masking tape here?" She asks, her voice quivering.

"What for?" I say, not sure whether it was out-loud or not.

"We've got to label all of these boxes that are going with you."

"Mom, it's not necessary, really. I'll just open them and see for myself when I get there."

"I've got the magic marker here, so I just need the masking tape," she says. I reach on the middle step for the tape and hand it to her. Our eyes do not meet.

"Your father will be home soon, and he'll want to move you before dark, so we ought to get this stuff ready."

"I've got someone coming to help me Mum. Don't worry. I didn't want Dad to hurt his back again."

"Oh," she says as she writes "Kitchen" on a large box. I glance down at the bottom of my socks and let the stale air out of my lungs as I notice they are only a little colored, but not dirty.

[She does not pull]

She does not pull.
Her wise, steady hands
slowly unbraid
the feeble heartstrings
I have flung heedlessly
about her neck.

She does not rip.
I watch in wonderment
as she cradles each
like antique napkins
then folds and places them
smooth on my lap.

Jada Williams

Florida

I stop in darkness to hear
fizzing of night sprinklers.
I smell it all around me
like hot swamp moss and
geranium sweat.
Cotton sick pillows and
tired worm holes in
cantaloupe flesh.
Brown tomb bowels of
mildewed lilacs and the
lizard breath of old closed
pollywog jars.

Jada Williams

Way Too Late Into Winter's Wake

She said, "I'm the queen of mean, I'm the meanest queen you've ever seen." Though she was everything apple pie could ever be. Just like one of those teen queens in a John Hughes movie like pretty in pink, or sixteen candles, minus the red hair and freckles, but still the kind of girl you wanna love.
"You should have no doubt about my clout, I'm the queen of mean" a song of proclaimation, that sounded so serene as it bounced against the sounding boards in my ear.

Perhaps, it was more of a song of separation, to detach from what she could not admit to recognizing. She is late but beautiful, makes me wait, for what it's worth, and I know that she knew. Maybe I have to remind her.
"Brooke! Brooke!"
"It turns my tummy to be so crummy, I'm the queen of mean." I reached, to frame her face in my hands, to let her know that warmth still existed somewhere in winter.

"Hey, listen, it's okay that you're late, I still think you're great"

"I am so grateful."

"Thank you...Finally!"

"To be so hateful, I'm the queen of mean!"

I know her stay at the hospital will be brief, so why waste time. Then, I wonder why *I'm* here under —what the doctors call— a psychiatric review. She's the one singing songs--I think—as if this were *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* the musical.

"Stop singing!
Stop singing!
Stop singing!
Stop singing!
Stop singing!
Stop singing!"

It takes seven to bring me down, to slip the needle; slipping. The plunger plunges, soon enough today will be tomorrow, it'll all be same to someone who can't tell the difference.

And I will wake too late, screaming, "Brooke where are you?"
"Please Brooke it's cold, it's winter and I want to be warm."

Her company fades into the back of my brain, serenity is something I'll remember when I wake.

David Fernandez

"Silence"
Gelatin Silver Print
Philip Nerboso

"Kelle"
Gelatin Silver Print
Jenn Marquez

"Just Curious"
Gelatin Silver Print
Philip Nerboso

"Josie"
Gelatin Silver Print
Jenn Marquez

Ryan Tillotson

[Untitled]

I am Roger the Great. Yes, you may have seen me and you have feared me and you have been right to fear me. I might be called Roger the Unassailable, for I am (among many other things) the undisputed spelling bee Champion at Aurora Christian Grammar School, at which I am a fifth grader. Even your parents are afraid of me because I easily embarrass you (and them) at spelling bees, math problems and science questions and I know who Descartes is and there's nothing your Mom and Dad can do about it--I am Roger the Great. What's more, I am a certified computing genius. I located my first web sites, by IP number alone, at age two. That's right. You were still being spoon-fed strained peas and trying not to slobber on the keyboard as your peeved Moms and Dads tried to get you to complete just one section of your pathetic Sesame Street Fun with Grover shapes game, while I was rubbing elbows with giants in the computing industry. Yep, there's nothing they could do, and there's nothing they can do still--your Mom and Dad did not give birth to Roger the Great. I could stack blocks perfectly and stay in the lines before you knew how to properly use diapers. I'm sorry, but it's true.

Maybe if I tell you about my illustrious ten years on this Spaceship Earth so far, you'll understand better. Maybe you can enjoy your ridiculous Pokemon cards when you're crying at night in front of the TV, trying to understand the dialogue on the Cartoon Channel--if you realize it's completely out of your power--you can never be like Roger the Great. And, especially never like Roger the Unassailable.

I can't tell you that my Mom's doctors wanted to administer an IQ test while I was in utero, but that's not far from the truth. There was something, Mom told me, about the way I kicked inside of her tummy that let her know that Einstein had finally met his match. Even the technician who administered the ultrasound on my Mom's tummy raised his weary eyebrows (obviously he wasn't Roger the Great either, technical skill or not) and proclaimed that my little image looked promising and that my mom should expect an outstanding ("super!" my Mom said he said in a funny lispy way, which always makes my Mom and Dad laugh together) little boy very soon. So even though in utero IQ test are still impossible, (but I'm working on that, it's one of my projects) my Mom knew she had something really special. She and Dad said they started buying things like Grey's Anatomy and the unabridged Oxford English Dictionary right away. Dad bought Mathmatica for his

PowerMac in Mom's third trimester. He says it was a natural choice. He knew something special was coming.

Most newborns need a slap on the behind to start breathing--chances are, you did. Perhaps you even needed artificial respiration when you were born. Many babies have to be convinced that their new life is physically possible. Or even worth the effort. I'm sure you can imagine that was far from the truth in my case. As soon as Doctor Ambrose turned me over, I started to breath. That was my first perfect performance, Mom says. And, as far as I'm concerned, I've never stopped. And, when did you learn to eat with a spoon or walk on your own? I just want to warn you ahead of time that I did both in my first year. Please don't be discouraged--you're not Roger the Great. You're probably very normal, don't worry. I'm sure you matured well enough to suck your thumbs and desire Pokemon cards just as fast as anyone. But, have you learned Spanish by watching the Mexican Soaps and listening to the chatterings of your Eastside classmates? Of course not, because normal is as normal does. That's one of my favorite sayings, and now that I have my own Dell 450mhz Pentium III, the screen-saver rolls that across the screen anytime I'm not conversing with scientists or classical musicians or esteemed government officials over the Internet. That's right: "Normal is as normal does," is my motto. Mom and Dad say I have an incredible rhetoric ability. Among my other abilities. And--oh bother, that's my Mom by the way--she's probably made goose-liver pate again for dinner. I hate the stuff. I'll have to download some new recipes from Williams-Sonoma and show her how to prepare them. Again. The pate and crab bisque. Repeated ad infinitum, ad nauseum. Well, gotta go for now. Enjoy your Pokemon cards.

Guess what, suckers, come next quarter you're all on your own. Mom got me an interview with an entrance counselor at Illinois Math and Science Academy on the other side of town. So, soon I'll be respected for being Roger the Great. No longer will I be called Roger the Rectum or Roger the Righteous or Roger the Retard or any other of those other small-minded things you insist on calling me. I will be a God in the palace of the Gods--Gods of the mind. So when you're trading your stupid Pokemon cards on the playground, or talking about who kissed Syphilis Sally or Bulimia Betsy or whomever, just remember this could have been avoided. I could have graced your halls until graduation from slimy Aurora Christian, but you had to mess with me. Eventually, when you're all working at Wal-Mart, attending tractor pulls and worrying about your hemorrhoids in ten years, you'll wish you had treated me, Roger the Great, with more respect. I could have been the shining star in your shallow, flash-in-the-pan lives.

By the time all of you urchins read this, I'm sure you'll know that Donny the Dunce Diaz decided to harass me while I was walking back to my parents' home on the Westside. God knows why Donny the

Dunce was walking west down Galena anyway--I thought his trailer in the Barrio on the Eastside was the other way! Anyway, he chased after me and after failing to get my attention with his meaningless jabber about sissies and pussies, them attempting to pull my L.L. Bean backpack off my back, he pushed be into the snow. I think it was yellow snow…I'll have you know. Then he took my backpack and put it on his back. I told him that Dante said thieves and liars have their own special department in Hell. That was silly of me: Donny the Dunce probably thought Dante was a member of that juvenile group, N'Sync. So he sat on me, probably because he likes N'Sync and he thought I was insulting them. Because of my nearly indomitable will, I managed to tell him that I have several associates via the Internet working for FermiLab in Batavia, who are particle physicists who would gladly throw his Eastside behind into their particle accelerator, and run it full blast until all his smelly 150 pounds were nothing but neutrinos. This must have sounded like an insult to the Power Rangers, because he proceeded to hold my head into that suspiciously yellow snow until I managed to convince him to let me go. Of course, he will probably tell you that I was crying for my Mom by that time and he decided he had better things to do than to beat the snot out of Roger the Reject, but that is pure balderdash. I do not cry--I am far more diplomatic than that.

Needless to say, Mom and Dad were very upset that me and my North Face parka took such a beating on Tuesday. I tried to console them, but they would hear nothing of it and promised to take me to IMSA immediately, apologizing for not doing so much earlier. I felt bad that my Mom was so upset--she even burnt the mussels that night. So I decided it was high noon, and that I had to take action. So, I emailed my particle physicist friend over at FermiLab, one Alexander Mussorgsky, Ph.D., and requested a 30-minute time slot when we might incinerate Donny the Dunce Diaz with subatomic particles. I even offered to set him up with my teacher, Miss Williams, with whom I am sure, I said, Alexander could spend quality time. And with my recommendation, I told Alexander Miss Williams would be unable to resist him. Miss Williams worships the ground that Roger the Great walks on, and I told him so. Just today, she told me that if she ever had a son, she sure would want him to be as "thoroughly directed" as I am. I can't blame her--there's simply no resisting the charm of someone like Roger the Great, or Roger the Unassailable. I know what you are thinking! How could I be Roger the Unassailable if Donny the Dunce pushed my face into yellow snow? Don't make this simple error in judgment that Donny the Dunce did, though--there *is* a special place in Hell waiting for him. And, let's not forget Karma! Obviously, for Donny the Dunce's crimes against Roger the Great, there will be Hell to pay. After that, he can look forward to a fulfilling life as a dung beetle.

Doctor Mussorgsky didn't seem to think that the particle accel-

erator idea would do justice to Donny the Dunce Diaz, though. He wrote me back and said that he was unsure if "death by subatomic particles" was standard fare for FermiLab, or ten-year-old boys. I tought that was hilarious--only a Dunce like Donny would think that FermiLab smashes subatomic particles together over and over again so we can finally decide whether the universe started with a big bang or a big fart. Doctor Mussorgsky thinks that young men shouldn't have to worry that in just the next town over, the government is spending billions of dollars trying to figure out how to evaporate the Chinese. But they are, and I'm Roger the Great, as well as Roger the Unassailable, and can handle the truth. After his email, he telephoned my parents. That really got the IMSA idea going, I think. There's no way that Doctor Mussorgsky, Mom and Dad could waste another moment of my precious existence on a dump like Aurora Christian when I could be learning about evaporating the Chinese with subatomic particles at Illinois Math and Science Academy.

when mommy became mother

I found a picture of you and father
in my "memories" box.
You, in your black party dress
with your shiny heels.
He, in a tie.
You were smiling

Who are those people?

I think it happened the first year
we had a fake tree,
and the presents
smelled of old attic paper
instead of blue spruce sap.
Even before that,
the crisp autumn air
laced with spiced apple pie
smelled like it came from a can.

I always cry
when I remember the safe feeling of home
your smile used to give.
And even though I hated it then,
I find myself desperate
to hear you say:
She's the baby.
and I would say to you:
where did my mommy go?

Kendra Fitzgerald

a final gift from father

in the presence of your absence
I found my voice

it's my turn

to scream into your face
(fists dancing)
spraying the hostile saliva
of drunken insolence
upon your swollen cheek

you will never hear

so I attempt
reasoning with my conscience
to purge the memory
of you/father

at least I have found my voice

Kendra Fitzgerald

waking before you

for paul

the light of day
breaks my uncertain rest
I wipe the dreams
from the corner of my eyes
where they dried and gathered
overnight

wrapped in your warm morning skin
I raise my sleep-heavy head
from the slow-breath
of your chest
and find myself reflecting the smile
that holds you captive in sleep

the firm grip of your arms
around my body
secures us dream to dream
and for a moment
I wish you would remain asleep forever

Kendra Fitzgerald

"Chloride, NM"
B&W Print from Color Slide
Suthir Shanmugasundaram

"Vinalhaven"
B&W Print from Color Slide
Theresa Hadley

"Paris at Night"
Gelatin Silver Print
Jane B. Winans

"Forgotten Scholars" (Oxford, England)
B&W Print from Color Negative
Jane B. Winans

Ghostie-ghoulies at Thirty-one

It's the twig-snapping-feet-frozen-spine-shiver
of the monster stirring beneath my bed,
worse than any fairy tale I've ever read.

I know of the two-headed beast
that ate my cousin Betsy whole
and ruined our Thanksgiving feast

I know my monster,
who burbles and bleeps
coughs and sleeps,
eating all my children one by one
by stalking my fantasies, till I am
too scared to dream and happily numb.
I know when to dodge his flying wrists
and rest in between the bumpy bits.

And in the shower, the *Psycho*-slaying,
a woman screaming, hands to face—
eyes frozen on some unknown
forever-slashing-downward-arm…
then all is red, slower than water
as it creeps along the bathroom tiles...

Where would we be without our monsters?
Scared of what-happens-next. Waiting—
for-the-other-shoe-to-drop— grabs us,
holds us, in a darker shade of shock—

knowing there are no Intermissions.

Jane B. Winans

Tintagel

I took the batteries out of my travel clock
the frozen moments lay in worn stacks

how to dive into your blue-green
once more—

rolling winding green hills meet rock
cliffs jump to the patient sea below

hollow mouths drink seawater
in a tidal dance

fingers fly to make chords
as you play me your only love song

At the Dragon's Breath, incense-heavy cosmic shop
Gandolf sits behind the counter

sorting crystals.

I get my cards read, the future spread—
five years upon the table.

King Arthur's Arms wrap us in fine
Cornish red ale and vinegar salted chips

dreds fall in your face as you roll another cigarette
under stars and lamplight by the fence—

who pulled who first?
a familiar, yet new dance

you are woodsmoke tasting of the sea.

Boston bound, I felt the earth thirty
thousand feet below covered

in a golden-blue-green—
as I flew away all became white.

Your voice sings through a black box
surrounded by city noises. I reach

for the worn stacks on my desk knocking
your images to the bare tiled floor

like wind-scattered leaves they clutter
up Kenwood Street awaiting the white of winter.

Jane B. Winans